Greek Magic:

Ancient, Medieval and Modern

edited by J.C.B. Petropoulos

ROUTLEDGE MONOGRAPHS IN CLASSICAL STUDIES

GREEK MAGIC

Magic has always been a widespread phenomenon in Greek society, starting from Homer's Circe (the first 'evil witch' in Western history) and extending to the pervasive belief in the 'evil eye' in twenty-first-century Greece. Indeed, magic is probably the most ancient and durable among social and religious phenomena known to classical and other scholars, and it can be traced over a span of some three millennia in sources in the Greek language as well as in an impressive range of visual and other media. These include curse tablets from fourth-century BCE Athens, the medico-magical gems of late antiquity, early Christian amulets, and various exorcism prayers from the medieval and later periods.

Organized chronologically, the intriguing panorama offered by this book guides the reader through the ancient, medieval, modern and even contemporary periods, highlighting the traditions, ideologies and methods of magic in each period of Greek history. It brings together the latest insights from a range of experts from various disciplines: classicists, art historians, archaeologists, legal historians and social anthropologists among others.

J.C.B. Petropoulos is Associate Professor of Ancient Greek Literature at the Democritean University of Thrace and Chairman of the Board of Harvard University's Center for Hellenic Studies in Nafplio. He specializes in Greek poetry and is generally concerned with social-anthropological issues relevant to ancient Greek literature and society. He also has an interest in the reception of ancient Greek sub-literary and 'popular' song tradition beyond antiquity in the Greek-speaking world.

GREEK MAGIC

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CONTRIBUTORS

William Brashear was Keeper of the Papyrus Collection at the Egyptian Museum in Berlin

George Th. Calofonos is a Byzantine historian.

Vassiliki Chryssanthopoulou-Farrington is Research Fellow at the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens.

Antonio Corso is a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study-Collegium Budapest.

Alfred Gell was Reader in Anthropology at the London School of Economics and did fieldwork both in Papua New Guinea and in central India.

Richard Gordon is Honorary Professor of the History of Greek and Roman Religion at the University of Erfurt, Germany.

Sarah Iles Johnston is Associate Professor of Greek and Latin at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

David Jordan is a member of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Constantinos Mandas has a doctorate in ancient history from the University of Bristol.

Nanno Marinatos is former Professor of Archaeology at College Year in Athens.

Arpad M. Nagy is Keeper of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.

Theodore Paradellis is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Aegean in Mytilini.

Stratis Psaltou is a historian of religion.

Eleonora Skouteri-Didaskalou is a social anthropologist.

Charles Stewart is a Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at University College London.

Spyros N. Trojanos is Professor of Law at the University of Athens Law School.

Agamemnon Tselikas is a philologist and palaeographer, and is Director of the Historical and Palaeographical Archive at the National Bank of Greece.

Christina Veikou has a doctorate in social anthropology, and is a Lecturer in the Department of History and Ethnology at the Democritean University of Thrace.

Gary Vikan is Director of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland.

Nikos Xenios has a doctorate in political philosophy.

PROLOGUE

This book brings together the articles that appeared in four successive special issues on magic (December 1999–December 2000) in the trimonthly Greek journal, *Archaiologia kai Technes*. Mrs Anna Lambraki, the publisher of the journal, formulated the topic. She and all of the staff at *Archaiologia* provided a congenial environment in which I worked as guest editor of the 'magic series'. Without her unstinting support for the project from its early stages, this compilation in English would not have been conceivable. I wish to thank her for all this.

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J.P.
Athens

Part I

MAGIC IN ANCIENT GREECE

1

INTRODUCTION

Magic in ancient Greece

J.C.B. Petropoulos

The Greek word *μαγεία* comes from the Old Persian *makuç*, originally a member of an ancient Median tribe or clan which became specialized in religious functions. St Matthew, as many of us know, recognized that the *Magoi* (in Greek) were competent astrologers intimately familiar with the sky. But well before the Christian era, Herodotus revealed the members of this *γένος* to be carrying out, in 480 BCE, actions which in other classical and post-classical sources are often called *γοητεία*, *φαρμακεία*, *μαγγανεία* or even *μαγεία*: if Herodotus is to be believed, these men performed unspecified *φαρμακεία* (*φαρμακεύσαντες*) on the Strymon River in Thrace and slightly later appeased blustery winds off the coast of central Greece by chanting spells (*καταείδοντες*).[1]

Magic, however, was hardly a Persian import. Its origin dated to unknown times in the Greek world and it was largely the province of local men and women. By the time of Heraclitus (*c.* 500 BCE) male practitioners might be called *μάγοι*[2] but more often, at least in the case of itinerant professionals, they had other names, such as *γόης*, *μάντις* or *αγύρτης*. In Chapter 4, Sarah Iles Johnston explores the death-related activities of this exclusively male occupational class. If magic was not late, neither was it peripheral to archaic, classical and later Greek society. As David Jordan and others have recently shown (see Chapter 2), while Plato was expounding his (rather peripheral) philosophical religion, mainstream Athenians were cursing their neighbours through magical means. In time, from the Hellenistic period onwards, magic became more and more elaborate and 'syncretic', borrowing much from Eastern mystery religions and especially Near Eastern and Egyptian lore, as William Brashear shows in Chapter 6.

How, in general, did the ancients' magic work? For one thing, it operated outside the sphere of public, or *polis*, religion; it was always private and usually had the character of mystery, or secret, cultic practice. Second, it mobilized, manipulated or even occasionally coerced the demons of the dead (*νεκυδαίμονες*) or certain (usually underworld or chthonic) gods, and it did so in an automatic, mechanical manner. Magic, in other words, normally lacked the element of *χάρις* – of reciprocity; hence the notions of supplication or vow were absent or extremely rare in, say, *defixiones* (*κατάδεσμοι*). Gods and demons were either

Figure 1 Medea, assisted by two maidservants, prepares her rejuvenating drug in a cauldron. Roman copy of a relief by Alkamenes (5th century BCE). Rome, Vatican Museums.

commanded or otherwise 'induced' (Plato uses the ambiguous term *πείθειν*)[3] to carry out the spell-operator's invariably selfish acts. These acts were meant to be either harmful ('black magic', which Circe works at first; see the discussion by Nanno Marinatos in Chapter 3) or beneficent (compare the medicinal effects of a number of magical gems, as examined by Arpad Nagy in Chapter 7).

Because of its destructive potential (which even Plato allowed),[4] and also because it worked outside the *polis*, often reversing civic religious rituals and ideas, magic was definitionally an anti-social activity in the Graeco-Roman world. Perhaps, as Brashear and Iles Johnston demonstrate, the driving force behind magic in general was the *φθόνος* and the frustrations engendered in an agonistic, competitive society. What is more, a number of laws and other texts which date from the early fifth century BCE onwards and which proscribe magical acts show that the Greeks and Romans regarded this phenomenon as a potentially harmful subset of religious activity. Yet despite its alleged anti-social

'marginality', magic formed the penumbra or background of much high literature and even of the visual arts. It is quite probable, as Antonio Corso argues in Chapter 5, that Praxiteles himself and other sculptors used magical processes to create lifelike, seductive statues of mortals and gods.[5]

Indeed, now our own 'rational' twentieth century has drawn to a close, it is high time we remembered that the ancient Greeks' legacy to Western culture was not only democracy and rational enquiry, but also numerous magical beliefs, practices and figures such as the medieval and modern witch and warlock.[6] Whether or not it is true, as the anthropologist M. Winkelman has argued,[7] that magical traditions generally have a serious basis in parapsychology, the study of Greek and Roman antecedents is a vast and compelling chapter in the history of religion and society. Wilamowitz put it well: He was eager, he said, to study Greek magic 'in order to understand my Hellenes, to be able to judge them fairly'.[8]

Notes

1 Hdt. 7. 113–14; 191. The term *μαγεία* is first attested in a dismissive sense in Gorgias DK 82 B 11, 10 (*Ελένης εγκώμιον*); but in Thphr. *HP* 9. 15. 7 the plural *μαγεῖαι*, is used in a neutral sense for 'magic'.

2 Heracl. DK 12 B14 employs the term *μάγοι* (in the plural) in a pejorative sense suggestive of a charlatan as do Soph. (*OT* 387 *μάγον... μηχανορράφον*) and other authors. The plural form *μάγοι* may be attested in a positive, technical sense in the Derveni Papyrus, dating from the late fourth century BCE.

3 *Rep.* 364 B-C; *Laws* 10. 909 B.

4 *Rep.*, loc. cit.; *Laws*, loc. cit.; however, at *Laws* 11. 933 B Plato is uncertain about this potential.

5 Picasso is reported once to have performed a quasi-magical ceremony before moulding clay. He also talked of his creative powers in magical or near-magical terms. See Berger 1965: 99–101; cf. also below, Ch. 23.

6 For instance, since L. Spohr's *Faust* of 1815 (based on the Faust legend but ultimately in large part on Graeco-Roman sorcery), about sixty-five operas on the same theme have been composed. Romantic literature and ballet also abound in related themes.

7 Winkelman 1982.

8 Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1931: 10.

2

THE 'WRETCHED SUBJECT' OF ANCIENT GREEK MAGIC

David Jordan

Over fifty years ago, the English scholar E.S. Drower published a careful edition of the Mandean 'Book of the Zodiac'. Shortly afterwards, it was reviewed in the American journal *Isis* by George Sarton, then the doyen of the history of science, who described the book as 'a wretched collection of omens, debased astrology, and miscellaneous nonsense'. In the next issue of that journal Otto Neugebauer, the historian of ancient astronomy, wrote a reply 'to explain to the reader why a serious scholar might spend years on the study of wretched subjects like ancient astrology'.[1]

Neugebauer pointed to the work of such great men as the Belgian Franz Cumont, who assembled a distinguished international group of philologists to produce the monumental *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum* (Brussels, 1898–1936).

> The often literal agreement between the Greek texts and the Mandean treatises requires the extension of Professor Sarton's characterization to an enterprise which has enjoyed the whole-hearted and enthusiastic support of a great number of scholars of the first rank. They all laboured to recover countless wretched collections of astrological treatises from European libraries, and they succeeded in giving us an insight into the daily life, religion and superstition, and astronomical methods and cosmogonic ideas of generations of men who had to live without the higher benefits of our own scientific era.

Indeed, the astrological manuscripts are better than any other source for the intimate details of the transmission of ancient astronomical concepts (Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian) and of their survival to present times.

Shortly after Neugebauer's reply, Alfons Barb, himself then the doyen of the study of ancient magic, wrote a thoughtful analysis of this disdain. He had begun his career as a specialist in the Roman archaeology of his native Austria. Rather early on, in 1925, he published a small, fragmentary scroll consisting of two inscribed thin metal sheets, gold and silver, rolled up inside one another. It had been found in a grave and dates probably to the third century CE. The silver sheet had a Greek text: 'For migraine: Antaura came out of the sea, cried aloud

like a deer, shouted out like a cow. Ephesian Artemis met her: "Antaura, where are you going?" "Into Headache." "Don't [go] to into [ ]"'.[2]

The little scroll is what the ancients called a *phylakterion* (from the verb *phylassô*, protect), which would have been worn by the deceased in his or her lifetime as a protection against headache. The text is part of a story preserved, in slightly different form, in a sixteenth-century manuscript produced in southern Italy:

> 'Migraine' prayer against headache: Migraine came out of the sea, crying (?) and bellowing, and our lord Jesus Christ met it and said: 'Where are you going, migraine and headache and eye-ache and inflammation-of-the-breath and tears and inflammation-of-the-cornea and dizziness-in-the-head?' And headache answered our lord Jesus Christ: 'We are going to sit on the head of the slave of God so-and-so'. And our lord Jesus Christ says to him: 'See that you don't go into my slave, but flee and go into the wild mountains and enter the head of a bull, there to eat meat, there to drink blood, there to destroy eyes, there to addle the head, to harm, to destroy. And if you disobey me, there I shall destroy you in the burning mountain, where dog bays not and cock crows not'. Thou who set the mountain in the sea, set migraine and pain to the head, the forehead, the brows, the brain of the slave of God so-and-so.[3]

This phylactery and the 'migraine prayer' and the long search to document their background in folk belief were to play a major role in Barb's own development as a scholar. He was a deeply religious man, a practising Roman Catholic. In the Hitler years, he settled in London, where he eventually found a post as librarian at the Warburg Institute, itself long a centre for the study of the 'wretched subjects' that Neugebauer had defended. With such bibliographical resources now at his disposal, he produced an article that will remain a classic for the study of Christian iconography,[4] in which he shows, somewhat *contra exspectationem*, that the imagery of certain representations of the Virgin Mary can be traced back to that of the headache demon Antaura who rose from the sea. His years of research gave him a valuable perspective; a result was his own analysis of the opposition to the study of what Sarton had called 'miscellaneous nonsense'.[5]

One of Barb's specialties within the study of magic was the 'Abraxas' or the 'gnostic' gemstone.[6] Throughout the Renaissance these semi-precious stones were avidly collected. The year 1657 saw the publication in Antwerp of a book that did much towards providing a scientific basis for their study, the *Abraxas seu Apistopistus* of J. Chiflet and J. Macarius (L'Heureux). Those were the days, Barb wrote, before Humanism was replaced by Classicism.

> The disappearance of the old-fashioned 'antiquary', outdone and discredited by the more fashionable 'historian' (who now in turn might expect a similar fate from the social anthropologist) has left a regrettable vacuum. With the advent of Classicism, it became *de rigueur* to deride any ancient object that

did not support one's idealized view of Greek and Roman antiquity. The classical archaeologist Adolf Furtwängler, for example, insisted that the magical gemstones of the Berlin Antiquarium should be transferred to the Department of Egyptology.

Barb might have told of the attitude towards the largest extant Greek papyrus of ancient magic, a codex of thirty-five leaves, in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: in the catalogue of the library's manuscripts it is described as 'fromage gnostique'. Karl Preisendanz, who edited all the Greek magical papyri that had come to light before the Second World War,[7] writes eloquently of the obstacles that German professors met when they tried to introduce these unfashionable texts into their seminars: one professor, in order to succeed in offering a course on the subject, had to announce the seminar innocuously as 'Selected Greek Papyri'.[8]

Ancient magic is no longer *déclassé* as a subject in academic circles, and the magical papyri themselves have reached a larger public through being translated into English and Spanish.[9] But if Barb were alive today and were still choosing books for the Warburg, he would see from the book catalogues that his fears were justified. The academic circles have sadly changed from those of his day: ancient magic, the texts of which in Barb's hands were a tool for research into the history of ideas and beliefs, is now popular mostly as the plaything of the amateur social anthropologist (now to be found even in classics departments), who, having elbowed the historian and the humanist aside, often fails to consider the texts themselves. I daresay these amateur social anthropologists would regard such texts, with their often contradictory details, their instructions for preparing magical ointments from frog's blood and worse, their outlandish names of demons, their reference to otherwise unknown cosmogonies, as nothing more than another 'wretched subject'.

From what I have written it will have emerged, I trust, that I am opposed to this development. Here I present an example from Greece of this 'wretched subject'. Published over a century ago, the text in question contributes, in its own way, to the history of traditional beliefs in the Mediterranean.

Above I quoted from the 'migraine prayer' in the south Italian manuscript. There Jesus dispatches Headache into the head of a bull. We are naturally reminded of the account of the Gerasene demoniac, in which Jesus sends the demons into a herd of swine (Mk. 5.1–20, Mt. 8.28–34, Lk. 8.26–39), but what we do not find in these Gospel accounts is his threat with its phrase 'where dog bays not and cock not crows'. Elements of this threat are heard today in traditional protective charms (*xorkia*) against the evil eye: 'Into the wild hills, where cocks crow not nor bride and groom have children'. In a charm from Crete: 'Go into the mountains, the hills, where cock crows not, dog barks not, to find the wild animals.' From Cephalonia: 'May sickness go where cock crows not, bells sound not, small child plays not with his hoop.' And from Athens: 'Jesus and the Penniless Saints chase the evil eye into the mountains, the hills.... There [no child] receives a hoop, and cock crows not.'[10]

How ancient is the phrase? In 1900, one Father Prasinos found on his property near the town of Arkesine on Amorgos a curious thin sheet of metal, inscribed in Greek. He transcribed its text and sent a copy to the French School at Athens. There Théodore Homolle received the letter and asked Father Prasinos to make a second, independent, transcription. Although Homolle had no access to the metal sheet or to a photograph, he was able, by comparing the two transcriptions, to publish a tentative text in 1901.[11] Its orthography and vocabulary suggest the very early centuries of the Christian era. The text is a prayer addressed to 'lady (*kyria*) Demeter, queen', written by or for a slave-owner who begs her to curse someone who had induced the slaves to escape. The curse includes the words: 'May no child cry, no happy sacrifice be offered, no dog bark, no cock crow.'

Here we see that the curse of 'dogs not barking, cocks not crowing' belongs to a tradition that spans two millennia. We can say a bit more. The goddess's title, 'lady (*kyria*)', is Eastern in origin, as students of Mediterranean religion have long recognized.[12] Excavators on Delos, by unearthing another lead curse tablet, have provided a good illustration of this.[13] Its text invokes (in Greek) the 'lady Dea Syria': she too is to punish a malefactor. The texts from Amorgos and Delos belong to a type of curse studied by the Dutch scholar H.S. Versnel, who characterizes them as 'prayers for justice'. The type is usually thought to have an Eastern background. Let me close with a speculation: could the motif of 'dogs not barking, cocks not crowing' belong to this Eastern background? Could it, in other words, be even older than its first recorded Greek instance, from Amorgos?

Notes

1 Neugebauer 1951: 111.
2 Barb 1926: 53–67. The text now appears, with further discussion, in Kotansky 1964: no. 13. Kotansky's valuable book is now the source to consult for this category of amulets inscribed on thin sheets of precious metal. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has a manuscript with a slightly different version of the spell (Legrand 1881: 17f.), in which Jesus sends the headache demon to Mt Ararat. A *Euchologion* on Mt Sinai also preserves a spell against 'Headache' but with a demon named *Aura*, and she meets Michael, not Jesus.
3 Pradel 1907: 7–33.
4 Barb 1966: 1–23.
5 Barb 1953: 193–238 at 193f.
6 See, for example, Barb 1960: 971–4; and see now Jordan 2002: 61–9, with bibliography.
7 Preisendanz 1974. There is an excellent edition of the magical papyri that have appeared since the war: Daniels and Maltomini 1990–2.
8 Betz 1986: xliii; see also Betz 2003.
9 Betz (n. 8 above); Martínez and Romero 1987.
10 The examples are collected by Homolle 1901: 412–56 at 426 n. 2. Cf. Pradel 1907: 267f. For further related examples and discussion see Stewart 1991: 238f.
11 Homolle 1901: 412–30.
12 Drexler, 1890–1894: 1755–69 at 1755.
13 See Jordan 2002: 55–60, with bibliography.

3

MAGIC, AMULETS AND CIRCE

Nanno Marinatos

The naked goddess and Mistress of Animals as an *apotropaion*

The object of this chapter is to show how ancient magic and myth interacted. A good example of such interaction is Circe, the Homeric witch. As I hope to show, magical images engraved on amulets and imported to Greece from the Near East were combined with rituals and literary tradition to give shape to the mythical *persona* of Circe the witch.

This investigation will start in the second millennium BCE in the Near East where a number of Near Eastern cylinder seals, beautiful gems which could be used as personal ornaments, were engraved with visual magical formulae. The efficacy of the imagery was sometimes reinforced by inscriptions, which were either dedications or prayers. For example, a second-millennium seal was engraved with pairs of Masters of Animals. The inscription reads: 'Marduk, wise one of heaven and earth, protector of life, who makes the righteous rich, light of heaven and earth: may the servant who reveres you, *the user of this seal*, be always in good health.' The inscription is thus a prayer accompanied by 'good luck' images, those of the Masters of Animals. But why should the Master of Animals bring good luck? It has been shown that this figure guarantees the order of the universe by subjugating wild animals which inhabit the desert or the mountains and therefore signify disorder. Jahweh in the Old Testament makes a similar claim of guaranteeing order in the Book of Job.

Just as the Master of Animals guarantees order, so does the Mistress of Animals in the art of the Near East. Sometimes she is shown trampling on an animal. A special feature of the female deity here is that she is naked. This emphasis on sexuality reinforces the potency of the female, which is also expressed as dominance over the animal world.

On a seal of unknown provenance, another nude goddess holds a goat by its horns in one hand while she seizes a lion by its ears in the other. She thereby combines predator and prey and establishes supremacy over both. Frontally nude goddesses stepping on lions are also known from Egypt where they were engraved on stelai. This particular motif originated in the Near East, especially Syria and Palestine.

Naked goddesses holding animals upside-down also figure on amulets. There is a class of Syro-Palestinian bronze, silver or even gold pendants which were worn around the neck and which feature such goddesses. Noteworthy is a gold pendant which was found in the Late Bronze Age shipwreck of Ulu Burun off the coast of southern Turkey. It may have belonged to a Syrian sailor or have been transported from Syria as a valuable commodity to the Aegean. This pendant is concrete evidence of the export of magical amulets from Syria. Statuettes of the Egyptian female demon Beset also depict her in the nude, holding snakes in her hands. These figurines have been found in private household shrines, their function being to protect against evil.

More surprising perhaps is the appearance of the naked goddess on weapons – shields, axes and horse-pieces. Such articles were imported to Greece in the Orientalizing period and have been found in Greek sanctuaries as, for example, at the Heraion of Samos and the Idaean cave on Crete. In all these cases the naked goddess was meant to protect the warrior and thus functioned as an *apotropaion*.

In sum, the figure of the naked Mistress of Animals served the function of displaying power in two ways: by dominating wild and dangerous animals and by revealing her nude body frontally.

Why should female nudity imply power in the Near East? Female sexuality was perceived as dangerous for males, as a trap for men because it might lead to loss of control. A warrior had to guard himself against the image of the seductive goddess on his enemy's shield or amulet. Here another component has entered our discussion: *this imagery was addressed to males, not females*, because female nudity was neither threatening nor tempting to a woman. The fact that the naked Mistress appears on weapons *carried by male warriors* defines the function of the Mistress of Animals as a patroness of men.

Now we have to explain why the threatening and dangerous naked goddess was also protective. The imagery of nude female divinities in the Near East and Egypt abounds on seals, stelai and pendants. Even the Egyptian protective female demon Beset can appear naked. The naked goddess is also a decorative feature of shields or weapons. Nudity therefore means protection for the bearer of the weapons or the owner of the amulets, statuettes, and so on. And yet, the logic of the *apotropaion* is always ambiguous. This object must be dangerous to the opponent but protective to the person wearing or carrying it. The shields, the pendants and the Near Eastern cylinder amulets were supposed to confer protection upon the owner and danger upon the enemy, since female sexuality was regarded as a dangerous trap for men. It is precisely this logic that underlies the figure of Circe in the *Odyssey*, inasmuch as she is a dangerous female who ultimately turns into the protectress of Odysseus and his men.

Circe

Circe in the *Odyssey* has many similarities to the amuletic devices of Near Eastern origin discussed above. She is a Mistress of Animals. She lives alone on an island populated with wild animals; wandering through her domain, Odysseus encounters and kills a huge stag. The house of Circe is surrounded by wolves and lions which rise on their hind legs to be caressed, as if they were almost tame. Circe is also sexual. Her seductive song lures Odysseus' men into a false sense of comfort. Odysseus will eventually go to bed with her at her invitation and will enjoy the pleasures of this cohabitation for at least a year.

In archaic vase paintings, Circe retains many of the features of the naked goddess. She is shown naked with a clear emphasis on her pubic triangle. Such portrayal clearly conveys the sexuality of the witch, whereas the image of the pig-men in these vases is an allusion to the demise of man after his encounter with the sexually dangerous goddess. On a sixth-century vase (Figure 2), Circe offers a drink to a pig-man, one of Odysseus' comrades who has been affected by her magic. Again she is naked. Odysseus approaches from the left, his sword drawn. On another vase of the same century, Circe confronts Odysseus, who is about to draw his sword. Circe embodies the unusual combination of sexuality and danger which typifies a number of Oriental amulets. When Odysseus conquers her, she will become his protective amulet, as it were.

Another issue worth investigating is why Circe is a witch, though in the *Odyssey* she is explicitly called a goddess. Witchcraft and magic are terms loaded with ambiguity and it is often difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between religious and magical rituals. One property of magical rituals is their anti-social aspect: they invert the accepted (religious) ritual forms. Circe, for example, does not give Odysseus' comrades the usual food prescribed by the code of hospitality, namely meat and wine. Instead she gives them a mixture of cheese, barley and honey, and Pramnian wine (which is not really wine but a strange brew; see *Od*. 10, 234–5). All this is food more appropriate for the dead. By offering these items, Circe consigns these men to the realm of the underworld. Next, Circe mixes in dangerous poison (*pharmaka lugra*: ibid., 236). This too is an anti-social activity. Finally she strikes the men with a wand (*rhabdos*: ibid., 238), clearly an aggressive act. Magicians often appear with wands in antiquity; in Egypt such wands take the form of snakes (compare Beset, mentioned above).

Moreover, magicians are marginal figures in society: women, outcasts, foreigners. Circe, although a goddess, fits this description well. She is an unmarried female, lives at the end of the world, near the gates of the Underworld, and she is a daughter of the Sun, a non-Olympian god. We have identified two components in the *persona* of Circe. First, the magical image of the naked goddess and Mistress of Animals who combines sexuality with danger. The inspiration behind this image most probably came to Greece from the Near East in the form of amulets or images engraved on weapons. Second, the ritual practices of

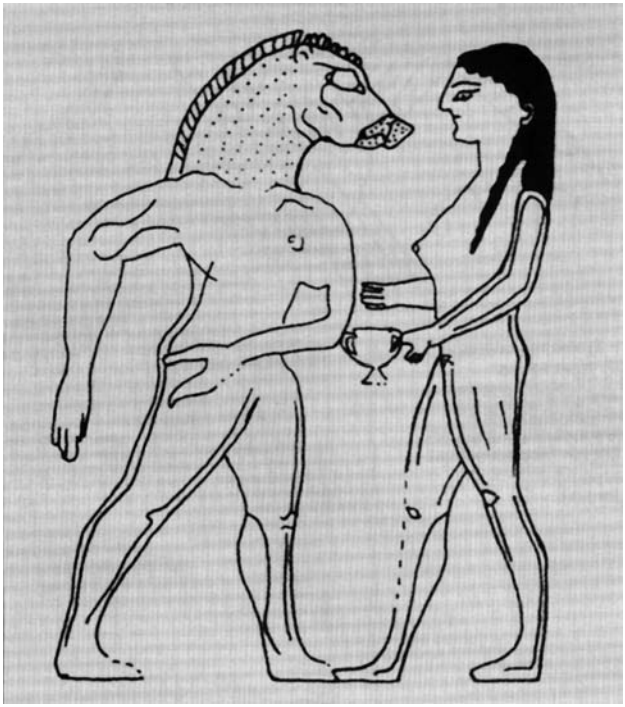

Figure 2 Circe offers her unconventional potion to a pig-man. Her nakedness brings out her sexuality. Archaic terracotta plaque, now in Sicily (see Canciani, *LIMC* VI, no. 4).

anti-social magic determine her actions: she gives the wrong food, more appropriate for the dead than for the living, she uses a wand, and she dispenses poisons (*pharmaka*). And yet, this anti-social witch is capable of turning into a helper once her sexuality is 'domesticated' by a man. It is a significant point in the Circe story of the *Odyssey* that she is transformed from a dangerous adversary to a helper and sees Odysseus safely through his most threatening adventure, namely the descent into the Underworld. Circe the sorceress becomes the protector of Odysseus and his men. In other words, *she herself assumes the function of the apotropaic amulet*. The interaction of ritual, magical amulets and texts produced a story, the unforgettable literary merits of which we owe to the poet of the *Odyssey*.

4

MAGIC AND THE DEAD IN CLASSICAL GREECE

Sarah Iles Johnston

The Corinthian tyrant Periander sent his henchmen to the oracle of the dead to ask where he had lost something.[1] The ghost of Periander's dead wife, Melissa, was conjured up but she refused to tell them where the object was because she was cold and naked; she said that the clothes buried with her were useless because they had not been burnt properly. To prove who she was, she told the men to tell Periander that he had put his bread into a cold oven. This convinced Periander, who knew that he had made love to Melissa's corpse after she died.

Periander immediately ordered every woman in Corinth to assemble at the temple of Hera. They all came wearing their best clothes, thinking there was going to be a festival. Periander then told his guards to strip the women naked and burn their clothes in a pit while he prayed to Melissa. Then Melissa's ghost told him where the missing object was.

So goes one of our oldest ghost stories, which illustrates how relations between the living and the dead were supposed to work in ancient Greece.[2] We learn from it that the dead demanded proper funerals, which ought to include gifts they could use in the afterlife. In return, the living could expect the dead's cooperation when they needed help or advice.

Every person in ancient Greece was concerned, like Periander, to keep relations between the living and the dead in good order, but during the later archaic age there also arose a class of specialists, to whom the average person could turn when problems with the dead occurred, just as Periander turned to the officials at the oracle of the dead. Such a specialist was called a *γόης* and the art he practised was *γοητεία*. These are words that modern scholars often translate simply as 'magician' and 'magic'. Their linguistic root, however, which is shared with *γοᾶν,* 'to sing a lament', indicates that the essence of ancient Greek magic involved communication with the dead. This communication could have several goals, depending on the problem that the *γόης* was hired to solve: sometimes he was required to appease the dead in order to avert their anger and ensure their help (the specialists at the oracle of the dead, whom Periander consulted, might well have been called *γόητες*). Sometimes he might rouse the dead into action against a living person, in order to serve the interests of a client whose enemy the victim was. Sometimes, finally, the *γόης* might advise people as to how they

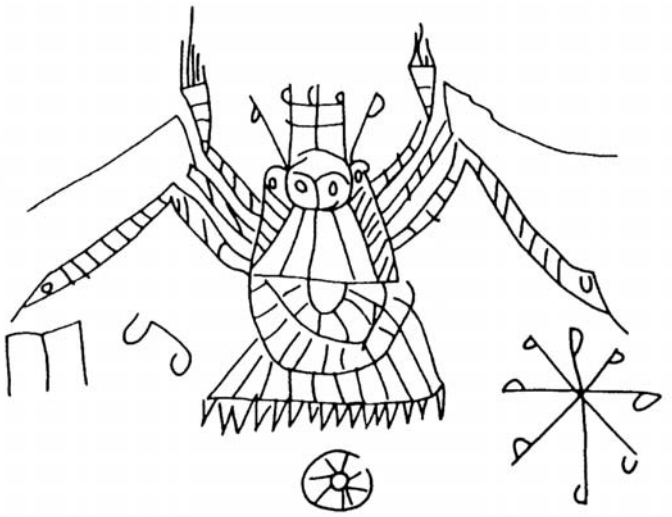

Figure 3 Among other divinities, Hekate was invoked in 'binding spells' to help the dead in harming a living victim.

could perform rituals while they were still alive that would ensure that in their own afterlives, their ghosts would be happy.

Appeasing the dead

In addition to the tale from Herodotus, we hear several stories about *γόητες* solving problems caused by the dead. One of the most famous involves the Spartan traitor Pausanias who, after being murdered by his countrymen outside the local temple of Athena, returned to punish the whole city.[3] Pausanias' ghost lurked outside the temple's entrance and frightened anyone who tried to enter it so badly that all business at the temple came to a halt. At their wits' end, the Spartans asked the Delphic Oracle for advice and were told by Apollo to call in Thessalian *γόητες* (or *ψυχαγωγούς,* 'leaders of souls', as some sources for the story also call them). These experts advised the Spartans to bury Pausanias' corpse near the temple, and also to erect two statues of Pausanias outside the temple doors.

None of our versions of this story tell us exactly what the Spartans were supposed to do to the statues once they were in place, but other ancient texts tell about statues of the dead being chained up in order to stop their ghosts from walking,[4] as in the case of Actaeon's ghost, who haunted Orchomenos, or being fed and then abandoned in a distant forest, as in the case of statues of threatening ghosts that are mentioned in a sacred decree from fourth-century BCE Cyrene, a Greek colony on the coast of Libya.[5] Clearly, when dealing with troublesome ghosts, it was best both to appease them with gifts or kindnesses (such as burial in the case of Pausanias or clothes in the case of Melissa) and to take

measures physically to prevent them from inflicting further injury, either by restraining them or removing them from the area that they were haunting.

There were other methods of controlling ghosts that people might undertake without the help of *γόητες* or *ψυχαγωγοί*, as well. From Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* we learn that gifts might suffice: when Queen Clytemnestra is haunted by nightmares that she believes were sent by the ghost of her murdered husband Agamemnon, she instructs her daughter Electra to pour libations on Agamemnon's grave in hopes of soothing his ghost and thus bringing an end to the dreams.[6] Libations were part of traditional funerary rituals; here they have simply been adapted to a new purpose.

Immediately after Clytemnestra had murdered Agamemnon, she had tried to implement quite a different method of controlling Agamemnon's ghost, in the hope that trouble wouldn't start in the first place: *μασχαλισμός*, dismemberment of the corpse, so called from the fact that the arms were hacked off at the armpits or *μασχάλαι*.[7] Obviously, *μασχαλισμός* didn't work completely, since it didn't prevent Agamemnon's ghost from causing nightmares, but it provides an interesting insight into the way the Greeks sometimes viewed ghosts: however much they might have considered the soul and the body to be separate in some ways, they also believed that the two were closely enough connected that to injure one might injure the other. We could also conclude this from the case of Spartan Pausanias, where burial of the ghost's corpse helped to assuage his anger.

Libations at the grave that were intended to appease ghosts might be supplemented at times by monthly offerings of food called suppers (*δεῖπνα*) that were deposited on the night of the new moon outside cities at places where three roads came together (*τρίοδοι*). These suppers were consecrated not only to the ghosts whose anger needed to be averted but also to their mistress, the goddess Hekate, since the living hoped she would help to restrain these ghosts. Hekate's close relationship to ghosts was the main reason that she became the divinity who was most important to the *γόητες* and others who practised magic in antiquity, a role that we still see Hekate playing in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Rousing the dead

This brings us back now to the *γόητες* and their profession. The expert who knew how to calm and avert the anger of the dead naturally knew how to rouse them up against people as well, and ancient sources are full of remarks about *γόητες* who do just that. In his *Republic,* Plato mentions wandering experts who knock on the doors of wealthy citizens, promising that for a small fee they will use *αγωγαί καί κατάδεσμοι* ('spells to lead on the dead and binding spells') to harm anyone their client wishes.[8] The meaning of *αγωγαί* is clear: these are spells with which the *γόητες* can 'lead ghosts' *against* the living just as the Thessalian *γόητες* led the ghost of Pausanias *away* from the temple of Athena.

Κατάδεσμοι, which literally means 'spells that restrain', is the technical term for what are usually called 'curse tablets' by modern scholars. These were small,

thin sheets of lead on which were inscribed requests to divinities who were thought to have control of the dead, such as Hekate and Hermes Psychopompos, and to the dead themselves; the divinities were expected to help compel the dead to harm a living victim. The tablets were deposited where the divinities of the dead and the dead themselves would find them most easily: in graves, in wells and sometimes under the floors of temples belonging to divinities who had a relation to the dead, such as Demeter. Our earliest curse tablet comes from the late sixth century in Sicily; they show up in Athens in the mid-fifth century and elsewhere in the Greek world beginning in the fourth century.

Curse tablets were used against one's enemies particularly in situations where competition existed: the courtroom, the sports arena, the marketplace and love. A papyrus that preserves a magician's private collection of spells includes a recipe for making a curse tablet of this last type.[9] Several real tablets based on this recipe also have been excavated.[10] The spell instructs the magician to write the following words upon the lead:

> I entrust this curse tablet to you, [gods of the Underworld], and to men and women who have died untimely deaths, to youths and maidens, from year to year, month to month, day to day, hour to hour. I adjure all daimones of this [cemetery] to serve as assistants to this daimon. Arouse yourself for me, whoever you are, whether male or female, and go to every place and every quarter and to every house, and attract and bind [the woman I love]. ...Let her be unable to either drink or eat, not be contented, not be strong, not have peace of mind, not find sleep without me. ...drag her by the hair, by her heart, by her soul, to me...

The magician who places the tablet in a grave is not sure whose grave it is; this is why he refers to the *δαίμων*, or 'ghost', as either male or female. Nor is he certain that this ghost can do the job alone; he attempts to ensure his success, therefore, by calling both on some of the gods of the dead and on the many other dead souls whose graves are nearby. The way that these dead are described is interesting: the magician particularly seeks help from maidens and young men who have died in an untimely manner: that is, before they have completed a full life, including marriage and parenthood. We meet these types of ghost, as well as the ghosts of those who have died by violent means or whose bodies lie unburied, in many Greek magical texts. These *δαίμονες* were considered the best sorts to invoke for two reasons: they were understood to be especially unhappy at having missed out on life, and would therefore be easier to rouse to anger against someone else, and their souls were believed to be unable to enter Hades; they had no place to rest in the afterlife. These ghosts did not enjoy the work that *γόητες* forced them to do: other spells try to bribe the ghosts to cooperate by promising that if they do, they will never be called up to serve the living again. Along the same lines, Plato tells us that people became very upset if,

when visiting their parents' graves, they found lying upon them a sort of small wax doll sometimes used to supplement the work of curse tablets.[11]

Sometimes the dead were called up by the living for less offensive reasons. The passage that opened this chapter illustrates one of the most important: the dead knew things that the living did not, and therefore could be used to prophesy. By the classical period, there were several oracles of the dead in operation. Judging from a famous literary scene, one might also call up the dead to prophesy privately. In Aeschylus' *Persians*, the queen of Persia asks the elders of the court to invoke the ghost of her husband Darius in order to get advice about the outcome of the war their nation is waging against Greece.[12] Of course, this scene takes place in what was, for the Greeks, a strange, barbarian land where perhaps everyone was likely to have such skills; if one wished to invoke the dead back home in Greece, one probably needed, once again, the help of a *γόης*.

The *γόης* as specialist in the soul

If the *γόης* was capable of calling up ghosts to help and to harm the living, and equally able to appease and avert them when necessary, it follows that he knew a lot about the way in which the Underworld worked, and how to earn favours from the divinities who ruled over the ghosts who dwelt there. Because of this, the *γόης* also developed a reputation as an expert who could prepare the souls of the living for the afterlife, by initiating them into special mystery cults where they would learn how to win a pleasant existence in the Underworld. Plato tells us this explicitly[13]: the same experts who travel door-to-door selling curses against one's enemy also promise that, for a price, they will initiate clients into mysteries that will protect their souls after death. Plato adds that in some cases, not only individuals but entire cities had been taken in by these wandering experts. This might be an allusion to the work of the Cretan holy man Epimenides, who was called into Athens in the late seventh century to deal with problems being caused by the ghosts of prominent citizens who had been murdered, but who also, while he was there, introduced certain mystery cults to the Athenians. Plato also mentions that some of the mystery rites taught by the wandering experts promised to help improve the situation of those who had already died – this would be good for a suffering ghost, of course, but might also help any living relatives whom the unhappy ghost was persecuting.

The duties of the *γόης* as an invoker of the dead and an initiator into mysteries came together in the mythical figure of Orpheus, whom several ancient sources call a *γόης*. Orpheus is well known to most modern readers for the first of these two talents: the story of his trip to Hades to retrieve the soul of his dead wife has been told by Vergil, Ovid and many a later poet. But in antiquity Orpheus was at least as well known for conveying the secrets of the Dionysiac and Eleusinian mysteries in his songs and for developing initiatory rituals for the former. The close link between the two functions of invoking souls and initiating people into mysteries is expressed by Orpheus himself in a late antique

poem attributed to him, where he claims that everything he has taught mortals about the Underworld in his songs was learned when he descended to Hades, 'trusting in my cithaera, driven by love for my wife'.[14] Orpheus knew what he did about the Underworld because he had visited it once himself and forged special connections to the powers that reigned there. We should remember that, as he himself emphasizes in the quotation, he was able to journey to the Underworld and regain the soul of his wife because he was a splendid musician: in ancient Greece, music of all kinds was believed to have magical power of its own, over animals, over the living and over the realm of the dead.

Of course, Orpheus' quest to win back the soul of his wife failed in the long run: eventually her soul was sent back to the Underworld, where it stayed. If, as so many ancient sources tell us, Orpheus was a *γόης*,[15] an expert in invoking souls of the dead, why did he ultimately fail in the very task on which all *γοητεία* is based? The dramatic requirements of narrative are part of the answer: tragic endings make for a better story. But the story itself provides another reason that makes perfect sense within the rules of *γοητεία* as we know them from other sources: Orpheus turned his gaze upon the soul whom he had invoked. Many a Greek text warns against looking at or interacting with the spirits of the dead whom one has invoked. King Admetus, for example, when he receives the soul of Alcestis back from the Underworld, is admonished not to converse with her for three days, after which she will once again be counted among the living.[16] A newly published sacred law from fifth-century BCE Selinus[17] advises the individual who wishes to summon a ghost to 'turn himself around' before the ghost arrives. When Orpheus turned to look at his wife's ghost, then, he was forgetting the rules of *γοητεία*.

One thing that is clear from our preceding discussion is that, like so many other things with which magic deals, the dead were a source of both potential benefit and potential harm to humans; one had to take precautions to ensure that they worked on your behalf, rather than against you. This was one reason that a class of experts – the *γοητεία* – arose in Greek society, to provide knowledge and techniques that the average person did not possess. But if we glance back through this chapter, we will notice something else: frequently, the *γόης* was associated with races of people who were considered foreign by the ancient Greeks who told these stories. Orpheus was Thracian and the *γόητες* who controlled Pausanias' ghost were Thessalians; in classical Greece, both Thrace and Thessaly were viewed as strange lands at the border of civilization. Epimenides was from Crete, another land viewed as mysterious and potentially dangerous by mainland Greeks. The Dactyls, divine *γόητες* who were reputed to have trained Orpheus himself, were associated with Crete as well. These attributions probably do not reflect reality, of course; although it is very likely that there were, as Plato suggests, itinerant *γόητες* who may have entered Greece from foreign lands, there probably were also plenty of local, homegrown *γόητες*. But the persistent association in antiquity of *γοητεία* with foreign lands nonetheless tells a tale: however useful the magical role of the *γόης* may have seemed to

them, the Greeks were never completely comfortable with it; controlling the dead, who are somewhat unfamiliar and frightening, had to remain the duty of someone who was himself outside normal society.

Notes

1 Hdt. 5.92.
2 The topics discussed in this chapter are more fully covered in Iles Johnston (1999). Further references to ancient sources may be found there as well.
3 See esp. Plu. *Moralia*, fr. 126 (Sandbach) and *Sertorius* 560 e-f; Thuc. 1.134.4, 135.1, D.S. 11.45 and Paus. 3.17.7–9.
4 For a similar practice, see Ch. 5, below.
5 *SEG* ix 72 (=*LSS* 115).
6 See esp. A. *Ch*. 84–164.
7 See A. ibid., 439–43 (cf. also S. *El*. 444–6).
8 Pl. *R*. 364 b5–365 a3.
9 Full text in *PMG IV* 296–466.
10 The tablets that are based on the papyrus recipe mentioned above (n. 9) were published by Martínez (1991).
11 Pl. *Lg*. 933 b 2–3.
12 A. *Pers*. 598–842 (the necromancy scene).
13 See n. 8 above.
14 Orph. *A*. 40–2.
15 Strabo 7.330, fr. 18 (=Orph. fr. 40 Kern), Lucian *Astr*. 10, etc.
16 E. *Alc*. 144–6.
17 *SEG* xliii 630.

5

ANCIENT GREEK SCULPTORS AS MAGICIANS

Antonio Corso

Ancient Greek statues were very often considered as the magical equivalents of the subjects represented, or at least as a sort of material container of their personalities and souls, and they were consequently believed to be endowed with life as well as the main features typical of human life, such as feelings, motion, voice, the power to make love, to listen and to determine happenings.

Already Daedalus was credited with having made statues provided with motion, feelings and sometimes also with voice. See, for instance, Euripides, *Hecuba*, 836–8:

> If only I had a voice in my arms
> and my hand and my hair and my footsteps,
> (...) through the arts of Daedalus.*

Compare also Plato, *Meno*, 97 D: 'They [sc. the statues of Daedalus], unless bound, run away and escape, but if they are fastened down, they remain in place.'

The belief in statues endowed with life has been thought to have arisen in Greece in the orientalizing period (seventh century) thanks to strong influence from Near Eastern cultures (Ugarit texts have been considered to offer the closest antecedents of these ideas), where the concept of living statues had a long tradition.[1] However the polytheistic and animistic conception of the world which was diffused throughout the eastern Mediterranean world and which implied the presence of divine forces operating in nature, inevitably involves the idea that gods and heroes, with their own personalities and lives, could also be present in their representations. Near Eastern influence, which is probable, thus favoured and made clearer a concept which was already latent in Greek Dark Age religion.

In fact, the idea of figures created by an artist and provided with life, mind and motion is evidenced already in Homer, who however attributes this power not to human artists/magicians, but to the god Hephaestus. See especially *Iliad*, 18, 418–20:

> Golden girls [sc. created by Hephaestus], like unto living maidens,
> in whom is a mind and wits, and in whom a voice
> is and strength.

See also Hesiod, *Theogony*, 581 and 584:

> and he [sc. Hephaestus] worked on it [sc. a crown of gold placed on the head of Pandora] many *daidala*, (...), wonderful creatures, like living creatures with voices.

Moreover, the creation of Pandora, the first woman, as narrated by Hesiod, at *Theogony*, 570–89 and *Works and Days*, 60–105, is similar to that of a statue (Figure 4), in as much as Hephaestus fashions her of clay, though she is nevertheless a living being.[2] The diffusion of the belief in animate, moving statues led to the practice of restraining statues representing deities of good fortune so as to prevent them from running away. Consider, for example, these cases: a) the wooden image of Wingless Victory on the Acropolis of Athens, was permanently immobilized through the deliberate removal of her wings; thus she could never escape;[3] b) the ancient wooden image of Enyalius who was represented in fetters at Sparta: held fast, Enyalius would never run away.[4] A Phoenician antecedent was cited in antiquity for this habit: the people of Tyre were said to have kept their gods in bonds.[5] However, this habit is evidenced across many cultures dominated by magical thinking.[6] This practice was also adopted at Rome, where the feet of Saturnus' image were fastened with woollen bonds.[7]

The attribution of life to statues may perhaps have paved the way for the belief, attested on Thasos in the early fifth century BCE, that statues could commit murder and other crimes and therefore be tried and convicted in courts of law; but this conclusion is far from certain. In fact, inanimate objects could also be tried under Draconian law, which was adopted at Thasos; thus the fact that a statue was tried does not necessarily imply that the statue was seen as an animate object.[8] The *topos* of live statues often concerns statues of the classical and especially late-classical periods: the largest body of evidence of this pattern are the epigrams of the Greek Anthology which describe works of art, especially of the fifth and even more often of the fourth century.[9] The prevalence of the 'animistic' way of regarding works of art was due partly to a 'theatrical mentality' (to use J. Pollitt's phrase), which strove to show figures as plausible equivalents to the subjects represented. It was also due to the success of late classical sculpture, whose favourite subjects were young naked deities, such as Aphrodite or Eros, and whose styles gave emphasis to the smoothed surfaces of the figures. These surfaces became plausible as renderings of the skin and were made even more credible usually through the smearing of transparent wax on them. These representational trends paved the way for what was the most daring outcome of the belief in living statues: *agalmatophilia*, or the desire of certain men to make love to statues.[10]

Figure 4 Athena adorning Pandora. Niobid painter, *c.* 460 BCE. London, British Museum

A mythical antecedent for *agalmatophilia* goes back to Cyprus, in keeping with the previous suggestion that the theme of live statues was particularly widespread in Phoenician culture. In fact, the name of the protagonist of this episode, Pygmalion, is typically Phoenician.[11] There are two different versions of this episode. In the first, Pygmalion was the king of Cyprus and made love to an ivory cult-statue of naked Aphrodite. This version was recorded by Philostephanus of Cyrene in his treatise *Peri Kyprou*, in the second half of the third century BCE[12] and is reported later by Roman Imperial writers.[13] According to another version, Pygmalion was a Cypriot sculptor who fell in love with an ivory statue of a gorgeous naked female which he had made. Venus brought this statue to life and he married his ideal woman. This legend, known only in the Roman world,[14] may have been the result of a *contaminatio* of Philostephanus' story by the myth of Daedalus, the creator of live statues, and subsequent Hellenistic instances of men who loved naked female statues. In late classical Greek society, two new forces must have favoured *agalmatophilia*:

The first was Platonism: the Platonic need for an art which transcended the imitation of nature promoted the belief in living statues. Moreover, the idealist journey from subjective experience to the contemplation of absolute beauty and love[15] encouraged men to seek intercourse with statues of love deities in the hope of achieving metaphysical ends.

The second was Praxiteles' art: this Athenian sculptor aimed at giving an appealing appearance to statues of deities of love and preferred to represent young naked subjects with smooth skin, which he made even more seductive through transparent waxes smeared on them.[16] Moreover, in working on statues which

were meant to commemorate theatrical victories (e.g., choregic sculpture), he developed a stage-like conception of sculptural images. All these features must have made some statues appealing enough to move men to make love to them.

An early instance of sexual attraction to a statue is narrated in sources dating to around 300 BCE: Cleisophus of Selymbria, having become enamoured of the statue of a maiden in Parian marble at Samos, locked himself up in the temple, hoping to have intercourse with it; and when he found this impossible on account of the frigidity of the stone, he immediately desisted.[17] The statue was a work of Ctesicles, also known as a painter, and active in Ionia in the age of the Syrian queen Stratonice, in the early third century BCE.[18] The most famous episode of *agalmatophilia* in the ancient world dates also to the early third century. It is recounted in the treatise *Peri Knidou* by Posidippus, probably the homonymous epigrammist of Pella, who was interested in works of art and whose activity dates to around 285–265. A nobleman, having fallen in love with the Cnidian Aphrodite, hid in her temple at night behind the door when it was locked, ravished the statue, left a stain on the goddess's thigh and afterwards committed suicide.[19] Two inscriptions from Cnidus dated to around 300 and 200 BCE respectively, may have been dedications from lovers of Praxiteles' Aphrodite.[20]

In an undated incident reported by Aelian (early third century CE), a young nobleman fell deeply in love with a statue of Good Fortune which stood near the Prytaneum at Athens. He flung his arms around the statue and kissed it. Spurred on by passion, he appeared before the *Boulê* and offered to buy the statue for a large sum. When he failed to persuade them, he put a large number of crowns and garlands on the statue, offered sacrifice, decorated it richly and killed himself, after uttering a prolonged lament.[21] Another statue of Praxiteles, the Eros of Parion in Propontis, was loved by the Rhodian Alcetas – it is not known when – according to Pliny.[22] The frequency of these incidents particularly in the Hellenistic period is hardly surprising. This is in fact also the golden period of the idyll and Arcadia, when figurative representations of Olympian or mythological figures in general were meant to be so lifelike as to appeal to the viewer and invite him to enter their seductive mythical world. Of course, only a few noblemen could dare to consort with the gods; our sources often either stress these noble individuals' lineage or report their names, which imply their elevated status. Entering the divine world, however, proved in the end to be a utopia, which is why two lovers of *agalmata* committed suicide.

With the removal of classical Greek statues to Rome, *agalmatophilia* put down roots also in this city. One of the Thespiad Muses brought from Thespiae to Rome in 146 BCE was loved by the Roman knight Iunius Pisciculus in the age of Varro or earlier.[23] Moreover, a bronze statue of a young boy by Strongylion, an Attic master of the late fifth century BCE, was fancied by Brutus, the Caesar-slayer.[24] Cases of *agalmatophilia* are not mentioned after the period of Apollonius of Tyana (first century CE). This suggests that this phenomenon disappeared as a result of his public teachings.

How did the personality of a deity enter into his or her statue? As I see it, this was effected through magic. Meleager (*fl.* 100 BCE) seems to allude to this process in an epigram on the Eros of Thespiae by Praxiteles:

> Praxiteles the ancient creator of living beings fashioned a delicate statue, but working stone into shape, he in reality created a lifeless, speechless figure of beautiful form (*agalma/apsukhon*). Summoning through magical means living beings (*empsukha mageuôn)*, he created the arch-scoundrel Eros within the heart of this stone. The statue is perhaps the same only in name, because it is more powerful in its actions. For Praxiteles has transformed not the stone but the *spirit* of the statue's mind. May Eros mould my disposition in a favourable way, so that having shaped my inner soul, it [my soul] might house the temple of Eros.[25]

There are thus three phases in the process of the creation of this statue:

first, the creation of the material statue, which is very beautiful indeed, but still lifeless;

second, internal life (*empsukha*) is poured into the statue through magic (*mageuôn*); Love is now moulded in the heart of the image, and his power is extraordinary;

third, Eros, in epiphany inside his own statue, can now transmit his power and mould the minds of people, including that of the poet.[26] The information given by the sophist Callistratus (third or fourth century CE) is consistent with that given by Meleager. See, for instance, his description of the Bacchant by Scopas (*Ekphraseis*, no. 2):

> The hands of sculptors (...), when they are seized by the gift of a more divine inspiration, give holy utterance to creations that are possessed and full of inspired enthusiasm. So Scopas, moved as it were by some inspiration, instilled divine frenzy into this statue. (...). A statue of a Bacchant, wrought from Parian marble, has been transformed into a real Bacchante. (...) Scopas (...) imprinted miracles on bodies made of inanimate matter.

See also his description of the Archer Eros by Praxiteles (no. 3):

> My discourse desires to interpret another sacred work of art: for it is not right for me to refuse to call the productions of art sacred. The Eros, the workmanship of Praxiteles, was Eros himself, a boy in the bloom of youth with wings and bow. Bronze gave expression to him, and as though giving expression to Eros as a great and dominating god, it was itself subdued by Eros; for it could not endure to be just bronze, but it became Eros with all his greatness.

Praxiteles was also said to have used supernatural, or 'magical', tools in fashioning his Cnidian Aphrodite. As we learn from two sources ('Plato', *A.P.* 16. 160;

Ausonius, *Epigrammata* 55), his iron tools did not obey him, but worked of their own accord, guided entirely by Ares, the god of iron. But apart from this detail, we lack any specific information about the magical practices by which a sculptor endowed a material statue with the personality of the subject represented. The fact that these transformations of statues are linked to Scopas and Praxiteles suggests that the most successful of the late classical *agalmatopoioi* were praised not only as artists in the narrow and modern meaning of the word, but also as magicians capable of bringing about the apparition of deities and heroes *sub specie statuarum* before the eyes of viewers. The belief that marble statues were trapped inside the sculptor's blocks of stone from which he miraculously released them and the related belief in talking statues (the most famous being the statue of Memnon in Egyptian Thebes) were common in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[27] However, from the Second Sophistic movement (*c.* 60–230 CE), criticism of cult statues as conventional and entirely material, and therefore unrelated to the gods, became intense and was expressed especially by Lucian.[28] The dependence of the shapes of the god's statues on the subjective opinion of mortals and hence their entire inconsistency from a philosophical and theological point of view, was stressed frequently by the Church Fathers, from Tatian and Athenagoras to Clement of Alexandria, Arnobius, Firmicus Maternus[29] and finally Theodoretus.[30] Yet the magical power of images did not end with the establishment of the *civitas Christiana*. Henceforth, beneficial influences were attributed to Christian icons,[31] and diabolical power was repeatedly ascribed to surviving pagan images.[32]

Notes

* The English translations, with the exception of Meleager *A.P.* 12, 57, are taken from their Loeb editions or from Morris 1992.

1 *Status quaestionis* in Morris 1992: 3–386, where a large selection of passages on live statues is offered; see also Nyenhuis 1986: 313–21. Comparisons with analogous opinions on self-moving statues in Burma have been suggested by Frazer 1913: 3, 336–8.

2 On the creation of Pandora, see Oppermann 1994: 163–6. On Hephaestus as a magician, see Faraone 1992: 18–21; on Pandora, pp. 100–2.

3 Pausanias, 1, 22, 4; 3,15, 7 and 5, 26, 6.

4 Pausanias, 3, 15, 7.

5 Plutarch, *Questiones Romanae*, 61; Curtius Rufus, 4, 3, 15. For examples of bound statues in Egypt, Faraone 1992: 78–81.

6 Frazer (1913) collected several analogous examples from Far Eastern Asia and Oceania.

7 Statius, *Silvae*, 1, 6, 4; Minucius Felix, 22, 5; Arnobius, 4, 24; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1, 8, 5.

8 The evidence is collected and analysed by Jones 1998: 139–43.

9 See Schwarz 1971.

10 See Robert 1992: 373–483.

11 See Wüst 1959: 2074–5.

12 On Philostephanus, see Gisinger 1941: 104–18.

13 Clement, *Protrepticus*, 4, 50–1 and Arnobius, 6, 22.

14 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10, 243–97.

15 See Plato, *Symposium*, 210 e–211 c and Corso 1997–1998: 63–91.
16 See Pliny, *N.H.*, 35, 122 and 133.
17 See Alexis, *Graphê*, fr. 41 Kassel and Austin; Philemo, fr. 127 Kassel and Austin; Adaeus, *Peri agalmatopoiôn* in Athenaeus, 13, 606 A; see also 605 F.
18 Pliny, *N.H.*, 35, 140: see Corso 1988: 453, n, 4 *ad locum* and 886.
19 See Posidippus, *Peri Knidou*, frs 1–2 *FGrHist*, 3 b, 447 Jacoby; Valerius Maximus, 8, 11, *ext*. 4; Pliny, *N.H.*, 7, 127 and 36, 21; Lucian, *Amores*, 15–7 and *Imagines*, 4; Clement, *Protrepticus*, 4, 47 and 51, and Arnobius, 6, 13 and 22.
20 See Blümel 1992: nos. 162 and 178 and, for their interpretation, Corso 2001: 227–36.
21 Aelian, *Varia historia*, 9, 39.
22 Pliny, *N.H.*, 36, 22.
23 Varro in Pliny, *N.H.*, 36, 39.
24 Pliny, *N.H.*, 34, 82; Martial, 2, 77; 9, 50; and 14, 171.
25 Meleager, *Anthologia Graeca*, 12, 57.
26 See my comment in Corso 1988: 50.
27 See Cicero, *De divinatione* 1, 13, 23; 2, 21, 48; Pliny, *N.H.*, 36, 11 and 14; Callistratus, *Ekphrasis* no. 9.
28 Lucian, *De sacrificiis*, 11; *Pro imaginibus*, 8, and Gallus, 24.
29 The related passages have been collected in Corso 1996: 54–8.
30 Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, 3, 71, 49.
31 See Cormack 1985: 9–256.
32 See Mango 1963: 53–75, and Cameron and Herrin 1984: 27–8; 31–4; 45–53.

6

HOCUS-POCUS IN GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT

† William Brashear

It's a bright, sunny day in Egypt. Which day in Egypt isn't bright and sunny and hot?! Two housewives, Thoeris, an ethnic Greek, and Flavia, a slightly Romanized Egyptian, happen to meet on the street while out shopping. The conversation that follows has much to tell us about Graeco-Egyptian magic in late antiquity.

THOERIS: How are you?

FLAVIA: A little under the weather. I've been running a fever for four days and can't seem to shake it off. How are *you*?

THOERIS: Oh, Flavia, I'm in love. Apart from that I'm fine.

FLAVIA: Anyone I know?

THOERIS: Down tending the grocer's shop. I've found out his name is Creon. Isn't he gorgeous?

FLAVIA: He certainly is!

THOERIS: Oh, Flavia, he's the most beautiful hunk of man I have ever seen! I can't wait to get my hands on him and have him get his hands on me! What am I going to do? He doesn't look at me! He doesn't even know I am alive! I can walk right past him on my way to the market, and he acts as if I didn't exist! I'm at my wits' end!

FLAVIA: Maybe he's just as interested in you as you are in him and just playing hard to get. Why don't you go to the Jewish magician down on Ibis Street? I know when Claudia was pining over Serapion she went to him. Jewish magicians always have the most powerful kinds of magic, and he helped her. Look at her now! The magician will have all sorts of ways to get the apple of your eye into your arms, I'm told. He can, for sure, mix up something for you, maybe for both of you: a love charm for you, a love potion for him that you can slip into his food or drink on the sly.

THOERIS: I knew if I talked to you, you would have some good ideas and give me some good advice!

FLAVIA: While you're at it, Thoeris, ask the magician to give me some curses to take to the races tomorrow. In fact, why don't you come along with me to the races? It'll take your mind off your troubles until the love charm starts

taking effect. The greens won last time! I want the blues to win tomorrow![1] You can forget the reds and greens! They're hopeless! I hope the greens and their horses keel over in their tracks! If he's worth his salt, the magician can make that happen too! Right now I want to ask the gods about a few things on my mind. Will I go on a trip? Will I be rich? Should I open up a shop? You can ask them too about the possibility of your marrying Creon.

THOERIS: No problem! But which gods? You have so many here in Egypt – most of them, slithery, slimy things like snakes and crocodiles! The gods where I come from are beautiful, and there are only twelve of them!

Several days later, Thoeris and Flavia meet up again:

THOERIS: Flavia, I've got the most wonderful things to tell you!

FLAVIA: Were you at the sorcerer's, Thoeris? Did you tell him what you wanted? Did he have anything to help you?

THOERIS: Yes, yes and yes! He told me he has an ancient Egyptian charm, which he found in the Temple of Hermes at Heliopolis. It is so effective, tried and proven, that it has been translated into Greek – no one speaks in hieroglyphs any more! Somewhere I have to find some apples! At this time of year it is not going to be easy, and I can't wait until autumn. Maybe I can use some pomegranates from last winter still lying around. They're a bit hard outside and may hurt him, if I throw them too hard!

FLAVIA: Hurt him?! What on earth are you going to do, Thoeris?

THOERIS: The magician told me to take an apple, eat part of it and then throw or give the other part to Creon to eat. The magician claims this technique together with a silent prayer to Aphrodite, the love goddess, is an infallible, irresistible love charm.

FLAVIA: I don't want to play the pessimist, Thoeris, but what if it doesn't work? Did he have anything else up his sleeve?

THOERIS: Oh, does he ever! If that doesn't do the trick, then I can bake some little figurines of Creon and eat them saying: 'I ingest your eyes. I drink your blood. I eat your liver. I put on your skin.' The goddess in heaven will look down on me and everything will happen just the way I want it! Isn't that nice?

FLAVIA: Sounds pretty gory and gruesome to me!

THOERIS: Well, he's so scrumptious-looking I could eat him all up, if I wanted to! Who cares about cakes and pastries?! I'd take the real thing any day!

FLAVIA: Drinking blood? Eating flesh? Thoeris, do be careful! Otherwise you might be (mis)taken for a Christian! They drink the blood and eat the flesh of their god, you know.

THOERIS: I can also go out onto the roof at night, undress, untie my hair, perfume my body, while praying: 'You are the perfume with which Isis anointed herself when she went to the embrace of Osiris, her husband and brother, giving her grace and charm on that day. Give me now the same

grace and charm you gave her on that day.' I am to pray to the perfume, lifting my hands to the stars, waving them back and forth: 'I pray not for beauty, not for fame, not for money. I only want him who ignores and overlooks me! Please, may he have no peace of mind, may he not be able to sit down and eat! May he have nothing on his mind but me, me and me!'

FLAVIA: Well, that all sounds very impressive! I hope it works! You certainly deserve a nice man like Creon! I hope it works!

THOERIS: I do, and I am sure it will. Yet, the magician also gave me something else in the deal.

FLAVIA: What's that?

THOERIS: A headache charm.

FLAVIA: A headache charm?! What ever for?

THOERIS: He said that sometimes all this hocus-pocus can wear you down. So he gave me a headache charm against three kinds of headaches. Here, Flavia, take a look at it.

FLAVIA: You *know* I can't read![2] Never learned to read! All those scribble scrabbles are Greek to me! But you *are* Greek. Can't you make out anything at all?

THOERIS: Not really. You see, Flavia, even if it is written in Greek, the words are Hebrew or Egyptian or some other foreign language. Magicians always couch their incantations in mysterious formulations. Sometimes the scribble scrabbles are not even in real letters but fantasy symbols they have thought up on the spot. He gave me the translation – it goes like this: 'Osiris' head will ache, Ammon's temples will ache, Esenephthys' migraine will drive her mad, unless my headache stops!' This is the charm I am to recite if I get a headache.

While the scenario sounds modern, it could have taken place in Egypt two thousand years ago, according to a Greek papyrus which was written during the reign of Augustus (30 BCE–14 CE) and extracted from a mummy coffin in Berlin in 1973. This papyrus is actually a whole handbook with instructions on how to conduct magical ceremonies. In addition to papyri, many amulets that were worn or carried by the enamoured persons have been found by archaeologists in graves or in the ruins of houses where they were left when the owners departed or died. These objects were covered by the hot, dry Egyptian sand and thereby survived to the present day.

The most spectacular find, which has earned the sobriquet of 'The Theban Magical Library', is unparalleled in the history of magical studies. Some time around 1828, reportedly in a grave in West Thebes (the precise details are unknown and irretrievable), Egyptians happened upon a trove of papyrus rolls and codices. Almost immediately the curators of papyrus collections in London, Stockholm, Leiden, Paris and Berlin rushed to procure books and scrolls from this cache. To this day the texts are unrivalled for their length and content. Composed in four languages and alphabets (Hieratic, Demotic, Coptic and Greek), these texts are

the most complete handbooks to have survived from antiquity. This cache may have been stowed in the grave in the fourth century CE to hide it from authorities intent on eradicating magic and its practitioners; or it may have been meant to expedite and accompany their deceased owner into the afterlife. Either way, the result was to keep this priceless treasure intact for 1,400 years.

Magical ensembles found in the 1970s in Egypt are now in Cologne and Munich. Each group consists of a vase containing, on the one hand, a Greek charm written on papyrus and, on the other, two wax figurines in embrace. Another ensemble, now in Paris, consists of a vase, a lead leaf and a clay figurine pierced by nails. Although their provenance is unknown, presumably these objects were found in graves. Instructions in the Theban magical handbooks (*grimoires*) for preparing amatory incantations precisely delineate the procedures for making such clay and wax figurines and depositing them in vases in tombs, especially in the tombs of the violently or prematurely deceased. These restless, wandering spirits (*νεκυδαίμονες*) could be invoked and commanded to do the bidding of the sorcerer.

Health

Next to affairs of the heart, bodily concerns seem to have been the second most important preoccupation of our forebears. Numerous phylacteries for preventing or alleviating diseases, aches and pains, especially fever, are also preserved in the aforementioned languages. Fever – not an actual disease but rather one of the multifarious symptoms accompanying (and thus betraying the presence of) many maladies of varying origins – has always been a formidable foe assailing the body's defences and defying most doctors and their attempts to rout it both in antiquity and in more modern times. People therefore placed their hopes in the traditional skills of medicine men who might prescribe anything from the dung of dogs, cats or humans to spiders and their webs or balneotherapy to cure fever.

Given the meagre panoply of febrifuges at the disposal of doctors in antiquity, Pliny's remark about the futility of combating quartan (malarial and undoubtedly most other kinds of) ague bespeaks the frustration ancient medical practitioners must have felt when going into battle against this ubiquitous and omnipotent – even divine! – adversary. Although the corpus of ancient medical writings, including anonymous tractates preserved on papyrus, occasionally broaches the subject of pyrexia, the ancients' attitude towards this affliction is much more clearly expressed in the numerous magical charms preserved from antiquity in over half a dozen languages – especially from Egypt thanks to the papyri. Egyptian fever amulets are attested from the pharaonic period on through later Demotic, Coptic, Arabic and Hebrew documents, but above all in the Greek papyri and parchments. Where Pliny and the doctors threw their hands up in despair, the magic-mongers rushed in.

The text of a Berlin fever amulet (P. 21165) (third–fourth century CE) reads:

> Adonai, Eloai, Sabaoth, Ablanathanabla, Akrammachamari, Sesenger Bar Phrarnges, aeeioyo Iao Phre ... eao iao eao, aeeioyo Ouriel, Michael, Gabriel, Souriel, Raphael. Semesilam aeeioyo. Salamaxa bameaiaza ... Protect Touthous, whom Sarah bore, from all chills and fever, tertian, quartan, quotidian.

Here Hebrew, Persian and nonsense names are mixed together in wild abandon, leaving no option open, in a desperate attempt to procure relief from illness. The 'ouroboros', the snake grasping its own tail in its mouth and forming a circle representing completeness and eternity, was already known in ancient Egypt. The Greeks and Romans took it over, as did European soothsayers and cabalists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. It is still in vogue in New Age circles today.

Oracles

The technique of consulting a deity about the future is attested throughout the ancient world, usually indirectly through the reports of ancient authors and historians. Only rarely do we have the actual questions themselves. Again Egypt with its dry climate has preserved dozens of these oracle questions for about 600 years.

Oracle questions (fifty Greek, forty Demotic and a dozen Coptic) consult various gods, Greek (Helios, Dioskouroi, Zeus) and Egyptian (Sarapis, Harpokrates), about the future. An oracle priest wrote each question twice (in a negative and a positive formulation) on a piece of papyrus, snipped the papyrus in two and deposited both questions near the statue of the god addressed in the question. 'If I will ... give me this chit back,' 'If I will not ... return to me this chit.'

Berol. 21712 (3rd – 4th c. CE)

> To my lord Soknopaios, the great god, and the gods in the same temple, Etrenio asks: if it is not granted me that my wife Ammonous return to me of her own accord, but I have to go hunt her and bring her back, then give this chit to me.

Berol. 21713 (3rd – 4th c. CE)

> To Soknopaios, the great, great god, and Ammon and Sokkopia. If we do not have a case, then bring this chit to me.

Metals

In the jargon of magical studies *lamella* is the term used to designate good luck charms and phylacteries scratched onto bronze, silver or gold leaflets, while *defixio* is the term for curses and bind spells written usually on lead.

More than a thousand ancient curse texts, written on a variety of materials, usually metal but also stone, parchment and papyrus, date from the late sixth century BCE to the fifth century CE. These texts have been found all the way from England in the north to Nubia in the south and from Spain in the west to Luristan in the east. Their contexts span a wide gamut of human preoccupations: athletics, theatrical competitions, judicial proceedings, amatory and business rivalries.

Gems

Thousands of ancient so-called 'Gnostic' gems (jasper, hematite, chalcedony, lapis lazuli, rock crystal, carnelian, agate, plasma, obsidian, steatite) are housed in collections around the world, most of them still unpublished. Minerals had associations with planets and deities and were believed to have powers suggested already by their colour: galactite, a white stone, was supposed to promote the flow of milk in women and animals; wine-coloured amethyst was believed to prevent drunkenness; red stones (jasper, hematite, carnelian) were to prevent menstrual bleeding. Incantations featuring prayers for health, luck, long life and good will were carved into the gems in Greek, pseudo-Greek, corruptions from Egyptian, Hebrew, Aramaic, or plain gibberish. Any symbol, alphabetic or spontaneous, fantasy creation of the soothsayer, will have made a strong impression on an illiterate, gullible customer and was regarded as imbued with powerful magic. Sometimes figures of deities or demons were also engraved on the stones. The gems were 'energized' by consecration ceremonies before they were sold to the hopeful client.

Notes

1 In Roman-style chariot races the horses' teams competed under various colours – red, white, green and blue. In Rome these famous colours may date to the end of the third century BCE. The fans of each colour (or team) in the hippodrome (or circus) were later organized along professional lines. Alexandria in the early principate had a large race-track, located in the south-west of the city. The hippodrome factions were intoduced here shortly before 315 CE. A number of authors including Dio Chrysostom (first–second century CE) describe the drunken, often rowdy claques at the city's horse races (*Or*. 32.31, 40–3, 45–6, 74–5, 77, 81, 89). See also Humphrey 1986, esp. 137–8, 505–12; Bowman 1986: 50, 145.

2 From the end of the fourth century BCE onwards and throughout the principate, literacy in the Greek language increased in terms of the volume of papyri, particularly in large cities under Roman occupation. Knowledge of grammar seems, however, to have been limited chiefly to administrative use, and outside government circles knowledge of Greek script and literature remained the preserve of a small but devoted readership. The majority of the indigenous population probably had no knowledge whatever of either Greek or (Egyptian) demotic. See esp. Bowman 1986: 158–9, 162; Thompson 1994: 67–83.

7

ANCIENT MAGICAL GEMS

Arpad M. Nagy

Around the beginning of the previous millennium we find evidence of a new genre of ancient glyptic: the so-called magical gems.[1] In that period and even earlier we note, to be sure, an increase in gem-engraving, but the types now appearing seem to differ from the others in conception. There are four main characteristics – obviously not always present together on all pieces – which are worth mentioning (the fifth, and perhaps the most important, will be mentioned shortly).

First, a number of representations incised on these gems represent deities and demons never seen before and unknown to both the Graeco-Roman and the Egyptian pantheons; in these cases, when deities of the classical cultures are present, they occur in new iconographical contexts.

This change is reflected mainly by the incised text accompanying the representation – a second characteristic of the magical gems. Inscribed gems of this type are of course not a new phenomenon, since the names of the gem-cutter or that of the owner as well as sometimes good wishes were often incised on gems at earlier periods too. The inscriptions appearing now, however, are different. In general they are written in Greek letters, but unintelligible in this language, e.g. ΑΒΡΑΣΑΞ, ΞΥΞ ΒΑΚΑΞΥΧΥΞ, ΒΑΙΝΧΩΩΩΧ (*ονόματα βάρβαρα*, 'barbarian words' making no sense to the uninitiated).[2] Also, their text has not been incised in the usual way, i.e. with writing reversed in order to be comprehensible on the impression; such gems, consequently, were not meant to be used as seals – as was usual in the previous centuries – but rather as amulets. They contain cryptographic signs, the so-called *χαραχτῆρες* (*charactêres*) alongside the texts and images: magicians considered each character to be the secret seal of a deity.[3]

In their other features they are similar to regular incised stones. As for the manufacturing process, it did not differ from that of other gems of the imperial age, given that the shape of the stones and the tools employed were identical. The materials used are usually the same, too, as those used for other gems: carnelian, jasper, chalcedon and hematite for the most part (these are modern names, which seldom correspond to the ancient terminology).[4] In addition to semi-precious stones, examples of glass and bronze are known, produced in general with moulds taken from gems.[5]

Our knowledge concerning the history of this genre is scarce at present.[6] Their production could hardly have begun later than the beginning of the Roman Empire; it continued in the second and third centuries and ended in late antiquity – in keeping with the general demise of gem-cutting and the legal proscription of pagan magical arts, which became increasingly harsh from the middle of the fourth century.[7] Though the workshops were probably situated in the eastern Mediterranean, nevertheless the scarcity of pieces of known provenance[8] must make us cautious. Their number has been estimated at about 5,000. They were obviously made according to recipes. Thus, for example, it is possible to find different pieces with the same magic formula – evidently incomprehensible and sometimes copied out inaccurately by the engraver. The inscription itself is the last stage in the actual manufacture of the magical gem.

Surely the most important difference between magical and non-magical gems is that the former required something more, an initiation (*teletê*), consisting chiefly of prayer and ritual practices, by means of which the magician used charms to charge the stone, produced by the engraver, with magic force.[9]

Among the new iconographical types, the representation of a being of unknown name constitutes the most noticeable difference from Graeco-Roman ideals of the divine. It is an *alectrocephalos*, but with legs replaced by two snakes and a cuirassed human torso. This creature holds a whip in his right hand and a big circular shield in his left, the shield being inscribed with three letters: IAΩ – the name of the God of Israel in Greek.[10] Near the figure the name *Αβράσαξ* (*Abrasax*) often appears. Present exclusively on magical gems, this iconographical type never appears on other objects, apart from a bronze statuette of questionable authenticity.[11] Contemporary research into this type recalls the case in which we know the final result of a mathematical equation, but without understanding the way it was obtained. It is certain that the divinity depicted is the Sun, which was of central importance in pagan theological thought of the imperial age (as was, for example, the Egyptian Horus or the Greek Helios), and is therefore the divinity most often represented on magical gems. It remains to be explained, however, why the figure is made up of elements which were never combined either in Graeco-Roman or in Egyptian religion.[12]

This example well illustrates the chief difficulty in the study of magical gems. Representations featured on them can be interpreted in a number of ways because of the polyvalence of the iconographical types; the same attributes may have innumerable meanings. Magical spells, on the other hand, are intended precisely to be incomprehensible to outsiders. The interpretation of single types depends in the first instance on the amount of written material relating to them. In rare cases the inscribed words happen to reveal the objective of the magical gem. A sardonyx gem preserved in the Hermitage at St Petersburg, for example, repeats a theme already popular from the archaic period of Greek art: Perseus flying with the severed head of the Gorgo. The text inscribed on the reverse of the gem, on the other hand, illustrates the context for which the image was freshly enlisted: 'Flee, Podagra, Perseus is chasing you away'.[13] Podagra ('Gout'),

considered a demon, has good reason for escaping: she is pursued by the hero *par excellence* of Greek mythology, his weapon transforming his enemies into stone. The efficacy of the mythical act performed *illo tempore* can be taken as valid also even after the end of mythical times.[14]

The use of a mythical or religious *exemplum* is a principle of popular medicine independent of cultures and times. A group of magical gems with perhaps the most representative pieces was similarly used for therapeutical purposes, but worked through a different mechanism. These were composed entirely of stones of green colour, decorated with the figure of a lion-headed snake with a crown of rays, and usually presented also a *charaktêr* consisting of three oblique lines. This character is so typical of the group as to have led scholars to give it the name of 'Chnoubis sign' (after the demon often inscribed). The figure of Chnoubis is known from Egyptian religion, and according to the most plausible interpretation, he is one of the thirty-six divinities dominating the single signs of the Zodiac in 10° triads (the 'decam'), and is perhaps the lord of the second part of Cancer or of the first part of Leo. As written sources show, an amulet furnished with such representations was to be worn against indigestion. It was tried out even by Galen, one of the greatest medical scientists of antiquity, who expressed his satisfaction about its efficiency. According to ancient doctrines of the salubrious effects of the planets, this decam is connected with the stomach. This view is confirmed further by the inscriptions of some of the gems of the type: *pepke* – 'digest'.[15]

Another common type is decorated with an ancient Greek iconographical scheme: the Aphrodite *Anadyomene*. The type goes back to a painting by Alexander the Great's favourite painter, Apelles. The picture won the appreciation of Augustus to such an extent that he had it removed to Rome and placed in the temple of the late descendant of the goddess, the deified Caesar. The theme was extremely popular in ancient art.[16] The word *Arôriphrasis* inscribed on the reverse of the gems (perhaps a secret name of Aphrodite) moreover suggests that stones so decorated functioned as amulets. One key to interpretation of this gem type is to be found in an ancient magical handbook, the *Kyranides*. This book records magical recipes, of which the ingredients are a plant, a bird, a fish and a precious stone, each with names beginning with the same letter. Under the letter epsilon we read that the stone *euanthos* has to be decorated with the figure of Aphrodite plaiting her hair. A piece of root of the plant *eusdômos* and the tongue of a nightingale are to be placed beneath the gem, and after that it is to be mounted and worn. As an effect of the amulet, its wearer will be loved by all, he will be famous and eloquent also before gods and demons, and all animals will flee from him.[17]

What was said about the last two amulet types illustrates the supposed operating mechanism of magical *sympatheia*. All amulets reflect a conception of the cosmos as being suffused with divine forces. Their principal sources of power are the sun and the stars, which operate in both living and lifeless nature, and direct life and death. A force of this kind can manifest itself in the greatest

variety of ways. Thus in the last example, amulets work through a definite *γένος* of plant, bird, fish and stone, the interconnectedness of which is established also by the identity of their initials, while in the first example they work on a part of the cosmos (the stars) and one of a microcosmos (the human body). If the magician knows the working of these forces, if he can manage them, he can also change them; his knowledge is power.[18] An illustrative modern simile would be that the universe is a closed computer system of gigantic size. Its operation is wholly impersonal; thus whoever knows the password has access to it. By his knowledge, the magician is enabled to enter it and to some extent modify at least some of the system's programs. To return to the two examples above: it was not originally encoded in the working project of the system that someone should be loved by all, or that he shouldn't have stomach pains. The two gems show that the magician has the power to change this. But while the Chnoubis gems were used only for one purpose (at least according to our sources), the effect of the Aphrodite amulets is complex: the demon enclosed in the gem has complicated tasks. And the less specified its use, the more difficult the interpretation of a gem.

For a rough understanding of gem amulets the most useful aid are the magic texts preserved on papyri (*Papyri Graecae Magicae* and *Supplementum Magicum*). A recipe of book XII of *BEM* (270–350) describes, for example, how a magic ring is to be manufactured, which 'renders glorious ... to the best of one's power. The Sun is carved ... wear it in purity.' The initiation, the *teletê* mentioned above, in this case consists mostly of a prayer dedicated to the Sun, 'rising early', and of the prayer which follows: 'God most great ... Sabôein, etc. I have invoked you ... perform this perfect rite.' Thus it was necessary here to engrave on the gem the image of the being to whom the magician addressed his prayers, that is, the sun god.

As has already been pointed out, it is possible that most magical gems show the sun god, a deity of pagan theology of the time, in various forms; but it was not necessarily he who was expected to fulfil the magician's wishes. For example, in an erotic charm (*PGM* LXI 1–38) it is a demon who has to secure the desired woman for the magician's client. It is he who is sent by the magician to NN, daughter of NN, with the following orders: 'Make her dizzy for all time'. The magician is able to press the demon to do so (literally) in the name of the great god: 'I conjure you, great god Thoth. Hearken to me through duress.' The identity of the god is made clear by the continuation of the recipe 'When you do this ... Abrasax'. The same god is to be asked, in one of his other guises, to put an end to an affair no longer desired: one only needs a scarab, to which he says the following: 'Gulp down my philtre ... orders you to carry out.'

As noted, the beginning of the production of magical gems is dated by archaeologists to the beginning of the imperial age. Nevertheless, ring amulets are mentioned from the Greek archaic period onwards.[19] Magical gems of the pre-imperial period, however, have not as yet been isolated as a type. The number of magical gems in an archaeological sense (that is to say those of imperial date) is much

smaller than those from the religious-historical domain (that is those used as amulets). Gyges' ring,[20] which made its wearer invisible, is at present also invisible to researchers.

Notes

1 The basic work is still Bonner 1950. Further important publications are Mouterde 1930: 53–137; Delatte and Derchain 1964; Philipp 1986; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992.
2 Brashear 1995.
3 Ibid., pp. 3440–3.
4 See the glossaries of Riederer and Ullrich in Philipp 1986: 27–46, and Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 41–9.
5 On distinguishing examples made of glass and those made of precious stone: Raederer in Philipp 1986: 141–3. The scholar's task is made difficult by the fact that ancient gems could be copied in antiquity, as well as in modern times: see for example Philipp 1986, nn. 143, 167, 169. A series of bronze pieces: Bonner 1951: 307–9.
6 A good summary: Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 18–19.
7 Astonishing examples first of all in the books of Ammianus Marcellinus: Barb 1963: 100–25.
8 A first list: Philipp 1986: 8, 18.
9 Eitrem 1939: 57–85.
10 Summed up most recently by Zwierlein-Diehl 1992: 29–36. A bibliography of the name *Αβράσαξ* (its meaning is unknown, the number of its letters is 7, their numerical value is 365): Brashear 1995: 3577; see also Harrauer 1996: 31.
11 Le Glay 1981: 3, 1.
12 The attempt at interpretation that opens the greatest perspective is: Barb 1957: 67–86.
13 Jones Roccos 1994: 336, 55; R. Kotansky, in Faraone and Obbink 1991: 118–19.
14 Kotansky, op.cit., 107–37.
15 Michel 1995: 379–81. About the decans: Abry 1993: 77–112.
16 Scheibler 1994: 26–9.
17 Waegeman 1987.
18 Good summary: Fowden 1986.
19 Bonner 1950: 1–7.
20 Fauth 1970: 1–42.

Part II

MAGIC IN BYZANTIUM

8

INTRODUCTION

Magic in Byzantium

J.C.B. Petropoulos

> Even if those who deal in amulets contrive relentlessly, saying, 'We do nothing more than summon God' ... this matter is still idolatry.
> St John Chrysostom, *Homily VIII on Colossians*

Mark's account of the Woman afflicted with the Issue of Blood (Mark 5: 25–34) shows Jesus working a miracle without even realizing it: the woman comes up behind Christ in a large crowd and, by simply touching his garment, is healed after twelve years of medical ordeal. Christ has said or done nothing to cure her. Unaware even of her presence, he realizes only that the 'power within him' has suddenly left him,[1] having apparently emanated outwards. After reading Gary Vikan's chapter (10) we might understand that Jesus is functioning in this narrative exactly like the magico-medical amulets made of hematite which were meant to prevent or cure haemorrhaging: somebody makes purposeful contact with a supernaturally charged medium (Christ's person or at least his clothes) and is instantly healed through its immanent power. This particular miracle, as Vikan remarks, 'comes as close to the essence of Graeco-Roman magic as any in the Bible'. A pagan would probably have construed it as an act of 'magic' – except that here, as Mark is at pains to stress, it is the woman's faith, and not only her brush with an object, that has cured her: 'Daughter,' Christ announces, 'your faith has made you well'.[2]

Given the range and various styles of his miracles, Christ would easily be reckoned by pagans as a *magos* – and if one violently opposed his particular doctrines one might, like the philosopher Celsus in the late second century, classify him as a *goês* ... hated by the gods.[3] If, moreover, Christ had promised to answer all petitions made in his name,[4] could he not also be invoked in a magical operation? Vikan reminds us that the conflated Christ/Crucifix often replaced the evil eye *apotropaion* on early Christian amulets in the eastern Mediterranean.

After an inchoate phase of 'syncretic confusion', it was soon time to draw firmer lines – notional boundaries and, it also turned out, battle lines – between magic and the emergent religion. The Early Church saw the distinction as straightforwardly theological and moral: magic, indeed the entire gamut of

pagan religious practices (of which magic was in fact part), was reclassified as demonic (in the pejorative, Jewish sense),[5] as the work, that is, of incorporeal beings (originally fallen angels) who served the Devil. According to early Christian writers, magic, even when not an illusion meant to impress and ensnare, always was the work of evil forces, miracles the work of a loving God. As Spyros Trojanos notes in Chapter 9, canon law followed suit in the late fourth century, when Gregory of Nyssa declared in his third canon that magicians acted in alliance with demons. Yet old habits die hard – if they die at all: as Trojanos shows, the fact that Byzantine state and canon law persistently penalized magic, in effect continuing the anti-magical legislation of the Roman Republic and Principate, suggests the tenacity of a large number of practices which even pagans would probably have regarded as 'magical'. (This author also brings out the fact that under state and canon law heresy, mental disease and all types of crime were eventually branded as diabolical.)

Because Christians were by self-definition locked in a constant, if ultimately successful struggle against evil spirits, the paradigmatic miracles, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, were exorcisms. Exorcism, Gibbon's 'awful ceremony', was by and large a Jewish speciality, its purpose being the sudden ejection of invasive spirits from an individual. The trick, as Christians soon learned, was to force the demon to name himself and thus subject himself to the exorcist's mastery. The eschatological importance of the procedure perhaps explains the Byzantines' abiding interest in the names and especially the categories of demons. In Chapter 11, David Jordan demonstrates the replication, albeit with permutations, of six basic categories of demons in a succession of extraordinary texts which includes a third-century CE papyrus exorcism, an excerpt from pseudo-Psellos and an exorcism attributed (probably wrongly) to St Ephrem the Syrian.

Jordan's investigation bears out the close connection between ancient philosophy and science, on the one hand, and erudite medieval magic on the other. Indeed, philological enquiry confirms one of the key findings of archaeologists and art historians studying Byzantine material culture: Byzantine magic was a composite of postclassical and Christian erudite forms and practices encrusted, as it were, with popular elements of varied origin that persisted well beyond 1453. The spells, the exorcism texts and the *nomocanones* from three post-Byzantine manuscripts, here published for the first time by Agamemnon Tselikas in Chapter 13, contain many elements that bear a striking resemblance to motifs and procedures attested in the magical papyri of late antiquity. Is it by mere chance that one of Tselikas' exorcisms refers to δαιμόνια καταχθόνια and εναέρια, two categories which Jordan traces to Empedocles via the Chaldaean oracles?

Theologically speaking, religion and magic were not only diametrically opposed (God vs. the Devil) but mutually exclusive: as Paul put it, 'I do not want you to become sharers with the demons'.[6] In reality, though, magic often drew upon the texts and practices of the established faith in furthering its aims. (This was only natural in a society which had a well-entrenched system of

authoritative scripture and ritual.) The episode from the tenth-century fictional *vita* of St Andrew the Fool which George Calofonos discusses in Chapter 12 is indeed 'a compelling narrative', almost comparable to a psychological thriller. Apart from its entertainment value, this portion of the *vita*, as Calofonos points out, has a clear didactic purpose: to expose magic as a dangerous hoax to which the desperate and gullible are especially prone. In the text a magus named Vigrinos attracts a large clientèle by posing as a pious Christian and using the accessories of the Orthodox religion – for instance, a censer and icons. In actual fact his actions amount to a sickening perversion of the baptismal rite. Vigrinos may have solved his client's immediate problem, but the succession of horrific dreams which both she and her spiritual father experience afterwards points to the disastrous consequences of magic. That indeed was the oft-beguiling paradox of Byzantine – and generally Christian – magic: it usually borrowed from the ideology and rituals of the true faith, yet it always was, according at least to the Church, its very perversion.

Notes

1 Mark 5: 30.
2 Ibid., 34; cf. ibid., 28–9.
3 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.71.
4 John 14:14: 'If you ask anything in my name, I will do it'.
5 Cf., e.g., I Cor. 10: 20: 'the things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God'.
6 Ibid.

9

MAGIC AND THE DEVIL

From the Old to the New Rome

Spyros N. Trojanos

In Rome magic had been criminalized quite early, especially in relation to two acts: worship which was unacceptable to law and order, and any association with poisonous substances, since the lethal effect or other harmful consequences of the latter were ascribed to supernatural powers. This is why the word *pharmakos* came to be synonymous with 'magician'.

From the *Pandect* it is clear that the Cornelian law on murderers provided for both categories of act. Thus, under this law, those who administered poison to someone in order to kill him as well as those who carried out 'evil sacrifices' were to be punished. It is understood, of course, that the protected legal value in this case was that of human life. Consequently the above provisions aimed chiefly at the protection of this good, and opposed magic only indirectly. The prosecution of magic was, nevertheless, associated with this law, as arises from the summary formulation of the whole legislation in the Justinian *Proposals*.

Communication with supernatural powers and their invocation, so long as they did not concern deities which were officially worshipped, were not 'legalized' by religion, and those who resorted to such practices violated the limits of 'normality' which were acceptable to the state's law and order.

In Greek philosophical thought, if its entire historical development is taken into account, the term 'demon' had a rather fluid content and did not necessarily entail its inclusion among the evil spirits.

The Old Testament does not feature a systematic demonology, because the monotheistic nature of the Jewish religion did not allow for the existence of intermediate beings on a more or less divine level. At any rate, in the Old Testament we find traces of demons of Eastern origin, with whom the Jewish world had once come into contact. They appear in the Jewish text under various names (which are rendered periphrastically in the Septuagint translation) and are represented in various forms. To be sure, all worship of these demons and any divining practice were forbidden explicitly. However, the Devil is not associated with these demons in the Old Testament. Only in the late Judaic period do we find in spurious works the emergence of certain conceptions, under Persian and Hellenistic influences, that admit both the grouping and the ordering of evil spirits, as well as their ability to interfere in human life.

Figure 5 Phylactery seal. Early Christian period. Byzantine Museum, Athens.

Neither does the New Testament contain a systematic teaching on demons. Traces of late Jewish demonology are nonetheless clear. What distinguishes the Old from the New Testament is that the latter accepts the existence of the Devil's 'dominion', which constitutes the opposite of God's heavenly polity. At the same time, 'evil' acquires a more specific form and the Devil is considered the chief of all evil spirits. Initially, certain notional differentiations were made on the basis of these spirits' provenance, but these were finally abandoned. The Evangelists and St Paul employ various names for the Devil and his instruments.

In its prohibition of the worship of various demonic forms, the Old Testament included every kind of divining practice. However, Christianity's reaction to magic was at first very moderate. The passages of the New Testament which oppose magicians are few and cannot be compared either in number or in content with the multitude of analogous passages in the Old Testament. The accusations levelled against Christians, however, that they supposedly performed acts of magic (as testified by apocryphal 'apostolic' texts, which recount miracles attributed to magical tricks), and the confusion that often ensued,

made it necessary to clarify the situation. Thus, in the earliest prescriptive ecclesiastical works, such as the 'Instructions', the so-called 'Epistle of Barnabas' and, in particular, the 'Apostolic Commands', prohibitions of clear Judaic origin gradually appear. The move from the apologetic nature of the initial reactions to the Church's attempt to bring under control all forms of association with supernatural powers becomes obvious in these provisions.

It is characteristic of the importance attributed to this effort that magic was among the topics that exercised the first local synods. At the Synod of Ankara, the first in the Eastern section of the empire (314 CE), it was decided to punish with five-year excommunication 'those involved in divination and persisting in pagan habits, or introducing certain persons into their homes in order to supply them with spells (*pharmakeiai*) and purifications' (canon 24). A few years later the Synod of Laodicea (*c.* 380 CE) prescribed a stricter penalty for the 'hieratics or clergy' proven to be magicians, charmers, mathematicians, astrologers or makers of the so-called amulets, 'for these are prisons of their souls'. Complete excommunication is prescribed in these cases.

The Fathers of the fourth century also tried to suppress magic outside the synods. The contribution of St Basil was of particular importance, because he repeatedly dealt with this issue from various angles in his canonical epistles, wherein he ranks magic among the most serious of canonical offences.

The anonymous codifying works of the first centuries and the canons of the synods and of St Basil identify the magical arts with idolatry, without however making an explicit reference to the magicians' relationship with evil spirits in general. The association is only indirect: whatever is outside the Church's realm – and this applies to pagans – falls under the Devil's jurisdiction.

For the first time in the field of canon law, the Devil was directly linked with magic in Gregory of Nyssa's canon 3, where it is clearly stated that magicians operate through the agency of demons after forming an 'alliance' with them.

On this point, however, state legislation and the Church's canons differed. It follows from the relevant regulations that what the state banned were private and/or nocturnal, and therefore secret and uncontrollable, devotional acts involving sacrifices. When such acts were public, and therefore open, they were allowed.

Of decisive importance for the criminalization of magic not only in the entire early period, but throughout the Byzantine era, was a stipulation by Constantine the Great which distinguished between 'good' and 'evil' magic – a differentiation which has survived to our day, albeit under a different terminology. Today we talk of 'white' and 'black' magic. This distinction was certainly not invented by Constantine the Great, for it is known, even from legal sources, that magical means were used for curing illnesses or warding off natural disasters. State legislation in the following centuries evolved within this context in its evaluation of magic as a crime.

Matters were different, as we have seen, in the ecclesiastical world. Here any recourse to magical means and methods was forbidden as absolutely incompat-

ible with Christian doctrine. In the eyes of the Church, every supernatural event which ostensibly is provoked by human action can only be put down to the assistance of evil spirits, that is demons. This applies even if the specific event has – at least superficially – beneficial results for one or more persons. To the question of how to interpret the ability of certain magicians to drive away evil spirits from humans and in so doing cure them, the answer given is based on the Gospel (Matthew 12: 26 and Mark 3: 23). In this case it is not the magician who expels the demons, but the demons themselves who depart of their own accord, in order to deceive humans as to the effectiveness of magic.

The communication, therefore, of magicians and diviners with demons constitutes – from early on – a *topos* in Byzantine theological literature. All Church Fathers, both in the East and in the West, were more or less involved with fighting magic. St John Chrysostom gives a vivid description of the relationship of magicians and diviners with the Devil. Through their identification with him they shed their personality and become his instruments, which, like a soulless flute, repeat everything he dictates to them: 'For when the demon falls upon their soul, he incapacitates their mind and darkens their thought and thus they utter everything without realizing what they are saying, but rather like a soulless flute utter sounds.'

The conviction that evil spirits have the power to transmit secret knowledge to persons who come under their sway is a *topos* of popular thought. It was in this way that the notion of a pact with the Devil was born and became extremely widespread. This is richly attested, chiefly in hagiological sources. According to these testimonies, a magician usually undertakes the role of mediator, and the agreement is as a rule a written one, accompanied by a form of real surety. The soul of the 'contracting party' is offered to the Devil as a guarantee, though at times it is the soul of a third party that is offered – for instance, that of a child yet to be born. The necessary precondition for exemption from these undertakings and for the return of the surety is the destruction of the document of the agreement. Hence, great importance is attached in the texts to the attempt to extract the document from the Devil. To this end a powerful saint is mobilized, at times the Holy Virgin herself. Research has identified the ultimate models of these narratives in ancient Greek and Eastern traditions.

We find descriptions of the drawing up of a pact with the Devil in early Byzantium already in the fourth century. In the evolution of these texts the characteristics of the protagonists, as well the content of the myth, do not remain constant. With the passage of time, they are affected by the changes in the social structures and especially in Christian teaching. In the earlier instances, the types of demon, the indirect way they act and their relationship with the magician – which is not a relation of servitude, since the magician can rebuke the demons – are testimony of ancient Greek influences on the fundamental content of the myth. In other narratives the change of scenery is obvious, when the Devil appears with features corresponding to Eastern models – which eventually predominated in the theological literature of Byzantium. At other times,

apart from the Eastern influence observable in the Devil's function as sovereign of a realm, we notice the thoroughgoing 'legalization' of the entire relationship of the agreement, based on the everyday experiences of legal matters of the period. As we know, the written form was dominant in Byzantine law.

Starting with the magician Simon of the Acts of the Apostles – an episode which was greatly elaborated in the apocryphal Acts of the first centuries – hagiographical texts generally bring out magic as a typically Jewish activity.

Among the various activities attributed to the Devil is the corruption of the true faith – indeed it is one of the most important. Thus, he is thought to be responsible for the emergence of the great heresies. The iconomachy is a characteristic example, which in the eighth and ninth centuries shook not only the Byzantine Church, but also the entire empire. The Byzantines did not fail to attribute to the Devil the entire upheaval, which lasted for more than a hundred years, and in successive stages fashioned a myth about the origin of the prohibition and destruction of icons. The familiar triptych 'Devil–magician–Jew' again surfaces here.

According to this myth, an oversize Jewish magician proposed to a Syrian, that is an Arab, Caliph (Yazid II [720–724] is implied) the following contract: the Jew would secure an untroubled 30–40-year reign for the Caliph, if the latter banned the icons of the Christians. The Caliph accepted the proposition and an agreement was drawn up. The disappearance of the icons from the Caliphate was the model, according to the myth, for the Byzantine emperors.

Scholars have argued that the Caliph's description matches the emperor Constantine V, given that as a scion of the 'Isaurian' dynasty he had Syrian origins. The large Jewish magician was none other than the Devil. The allegory was perfectly obvious: the iconomachy was founded on an agreement made by the Isauroi emperors with the Devil. It goes without saying that while members of this dynasty were still on the throne, such a tale could not circulate openly.

Another legend which is very similar in content concerns Julian the Apostate. Julian, it was claimed, renounced the Christian faith and attempted to restore idolatry under the guidance of the Devil and a Jew.

The Isauroi devoted three provisions to the prosecution of magic in the legislative collection they issued in 741 CE, known as the *Ekloge*. Among others, magicians and sorcerers who called on demons to harm people were to be punished, and this attests to the influence of Church doctrine. This influence is also discernible in other clauses of this legislative collection.

A century and a half after the publication of the *Ekloge*, the legislation of the Isauroi was revised by the Macedonian emperors, first with the *Eisagoge* and then with the 'Provisional Law'. These two legislative acts contain many more clauses against magicians than the *Ekloge*. The legislative provisions of the Isauroi and the Macedonians correspond up to a point. In the clause, however, which chiefly concerns magicians and their collaboration with demons, despite the fact that the objective nature of the crime is maintained as formulated in the *Ekloge*, we observe a significant departure concerning its

subjective nature: 'Those calling on demons to harm people, if not acting out of ignorance, will be punished by the sword.' The wording of the text does not allow the slightest doubt that the perpetrator's ignorance is no reason for reducing the sentence, but it rules out punishment on the grounds of actual deception.

As mentioned above, from a certain period onwards the Devil was considered the personification of 'evil' and, in consequence, the source of every criminal act. In 535 or 538, Justinian notes this in Chapter 1 of his act (*Neara*) 77.

A few centuries later, Manuel I Komnenos portrays the Devil much more vividly, but also in 'poetic' vein, as the source of all crime in his legislative act (*Neara*) of 1166 which concerns the penal treatment of murderers. The father of evil has sown in the leaders of the human race the roots of evil in the form of evil and murder. He conceived envy, but after the pregnancy he gave birth to murder as an enemy of life and a rival of the Creator of the human race.

This viewpoint apart, the very perception that magic could also serve good causes confirmed the converse view that it was apt to lead to horrific crimes. A terrifying incident is attested, with almost similar wording, in the works of two historians, Theophanes and Patriarch Nikephoros, in their description of the siege (and fall) of Pergamon in 717 to the Arabs. In order to bolster the defence of the city – according to the narrative – and to repulse the invaders, the inhabitants, following a magician's advice, brought a woman about to give birth (to her first child according to one of the historians); the magician extracted the child by Caesarean section, and the child was then boiled in a cauldron. Into this, those who were to fight on the city walls dipped their right sleeve. The historians attribute the fall of the city to this unholy act (and consequent divine retribution).

Regardless of the narrative's accuracy or the particular matter of its source, the fact that two serious historians incorporated it into their work proves that its content was, if not necessarily true, at any rate credible according to the criteria of the period. Besides, as can be deduced from much earlier sources, it appears that such magical practices were not unusual, especially for predicting the future.

Viewing as unacceptable the consequences of distinguishing between evil – therefore forbidden – magic, and benign – therefore permitted – magic (certainly not by the Church, but by state legislation), Emperor Leo the Wise overturned the distinction in the late ninth century with his act (*Neara*) 65, stating that magic was disastrous, irrespective of the goal pursued. Nothing will convince me, writes Leo, that magic can ever have a good result, even if it gives that impression at first sight. His argument has a theological basis – which is usual for this particular emperor – and concerns the relationship of magicians with demons. Whosoever, for whatever reason, invokes demons instead of God has lost the ultimate good: his soul. This person resembles, Leo writes in the law, one who wanting to protect his arms in a scuffle, exposes his head or belly to blows. Leo therefore bans every magical act, whether performed to cure

ailments or to ward off the destruction of crops. He does not explicitly state the penalty, but cites the punishment of apostates (being consistent with his perception of the nature of magic as an act of apostasy, in accordance with Church doctrine), which was nothing less than death.

According to the Romans and later the Byzantines, the resort to magical means, including the administration of drugs 'causing ecstasy of the mind', could cause mental illness or derangement. This also emerges from the legal texts which penalized the relevant acts. According to these notions, the possession of a human body by one or more demons had the same result. In the latter case, these persons are the so-called demonized or 'possessed'. The legally correct term for mental patients which the older sources employ is 'raging' (*mainomenoi*). But already from the middle Byzantine period, legal texts tend to use the term 'possessed', or similar terms, to define the mentally ill.

Both canon and state law were seriously concerned with the 'possessed'. In canon law, the issue was raised early on, as to how the Church was to deal with the faithful who were 'possessed'. Apostolic canon 79 debars such persons not only from ordination at any rank while in that state, but also from participating in the liturgical life of the community. The 'possessed' were considered to be unclean, because it was believed that they had some predisposition owing to their sins and somehow provoked the demon to enter their body. This notion did not, however, cover all cases. In some, for instance in the case of 'lunatics' as epileptics were usually called (their fits being attributed, in established Byzantine theological thought, to demonic acts), the demon's incursion was due to the Devil's general and continuous attempts to harm human beings, and in this way strike out against the Creator. A consequence of equating the subjection to demons with insanity was the gradual recognition of insanity as grounds for divorce.

The 'possessed' were an important chapter in hagiographic literature. A large number of the miracles contained in the lives of saints describe the exorcizing of demons and the cleansing of the 'possessed', indeed with particular frequency in connection with certain saints. Several works of this genre bear out the perception that magicians could cause demons to enter the human body. Here again the collaboration of magicians with the Devil appears, though in a different context from what we have seen so far.

A characteristic sample is found in the Life of St Hilarion: a youth, frustrated in his love of a maiden, resorted to a *magos* in Egypt, who instructed him in magical spells. As a result of these spells, the girl started dishevelling her hair, gnashing her teeth and shamelessly invited the young man to join her. In other words, she behaved as though possessed by the Devil.

The maiden was conducted by her relatives to St Hilarion's hermitage, and the demon, anticipating what was to follow, began protesting: 'I was happy and carefree at Memphis where I fooled human beings with the phantasies of dreams. To be sure I was wrongly despatched here.' He claimed that he was unable to abandon his victim, unless freed by the magician who controlled him:

'I will not depart unless the youth binding me releases me.' At length he was forced by the saint to vanish. The long interchange between Hilarion and the demon, apart from anything else, is also indicative of the current beliefs on the relations of magicians and demons.

It can be deduced from canon 60 of the Penthect Synod that there were also 'individuals' who pretended to be under a demon's spell, in order (it seems) to gain some material benefit, foreseeing the future among other things. In accordance with the canon, they were treated in the same way, since their attitude betrayed voluntary identification with evil spirits.

From the mock-'possessed' we must distinguish another category, the 'fools for Christ', who behaved as though they had been possessed by a demon, but regarded this way of life as a form of spiritual exercise.

During the last centuries of Byzantium, magic was extremely widespread not only among the popular classes but also within the ranks of the clergy, as can be seen from the numerous trials before the Patriarchal synod involving clergymen and monks charged with the serial practice of magic. When one reads synodic texts of the period, one comes to the conclusion that the leadership of the Church considered that all the Devil's activities against mankind were connected with the spread of magic.

Among the methods employed by the Devil to infiltrate people's everyday life was the confusion which up to a point existed about the precise demarcation between medicine and magic. Apart from the psychiatric field mentioned above, there generally existed a kind of professional competition between doctors and magicians. It was natural for magicians to call for the assistance of their protector in this rivalry.

The following instance survives in the sources. During an investigation arising out of a case that was brought before the Patriarchical court at Constantinople in May 1370, several books on magic were discovered, the well-known *Koiranis* among others, as well as a notebook full of demonic invocations and (magical) incantations. This was not a copy of a single book, but rather a compendium of many similar compositions – proof that its compiler had an entire collection of texts at his disposal. It was established that this particular text had been compiled by one Father Demetrios Chloros, who had just then been appointed protonotary of the Patriarchate.

In his apology, however, Chloros claimed that the contents of this notebook did not pertain to magic and, consequently, his soul was in no danger, given that – as he said – medical treatises contained the same matters. He claimed, in other words, that it was simply a medical book. The synod then adjourned and resorted to a probative method, common enough in today's legal procedures, but not so usual at the time: it ordered an expert opinion. It summoned the 'best of doctors', the elite of the capital's medical profession, 'and the said notebook was read for all to hear'. As the minutes of the synod report, the hall was shaken on hearing so many names of demons and their invocations, and the audience was utterly terrified. Understandably, the doctors' reaction was

particularly vehement, and they were incensed to hear Hippocrates and Galen referred to as magicians. Addressing themselves to the synod, their representatives stated that they had spent their long lives in practising medicine, and had inducted many young people to the field through the study of scientific treatises of Christians and pagans. As far as they knew – and the whole city could bear witness – none of them had ever reached such a level of irreverence as to renounce the faith and follow the Devil, recognizing him as a professor and instructor, for what they had heard bore no relation to medicine, but were diabolical works.

If we compare official ecclesiastical texts of various periods which refer to the 'Devil', we observe an absolute overlap as to the main feature of the Devil's activity, which is characterized everywhere as 'homicidal', but a considerable difference on the level of theological treatment.

This specific point is dealt with more fully in the text of the 'address' which the Fathers of the Penthect Synod delivered to the emperor Justinian II: 'He who was driven back from primordial beauty on account of his pride, the serpent aboriginal, the great mind, the Assyrian is captured by his former captives and by the power of the Word made incarnate is rendered powerless, for it is written "The enemy's swords vanished in the end."' In these lines, which originate from an ecumenical synod, we find in condensed form all the teachings of the Eastern Church concerning the genesis of the Devil and his place in the plan of Divine Providence.

The various Patriarchal documents of the last Byzantine centuries constitute the very opposite of this text. Their tendency is to popularize the phenomenon of the 'Devil'. Here the Devil is linked more directly with magic than ever before.

There is no doubt that with this direct association the Church met its pastoral needs, by delineating its own space in an authoritative manner. These needs apparently arose from people's growing search for other, new sources of knowledge beyond the accepted ones. A similar culminating trend during the waning of the Roman world was combated by the imperial legislation of the fourth century. Could it be that certain similar symptoms of our times augur the arrival of a new era?

10

MAGIC AND VISUAL CULTURE IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Gary Vikan

The object types exemplified by magical papyri and gem amulets comprise the bedrock of material-culture magic in late antiquity: the 'word power' of the magical papyri[1] and the 'image power' of the gem amulets.[2] Some thousands of the latter survive, some hundreds of the former, which is hardly surprising, given their material and the energy with which they were banned and burned. The papyri and the gems [examples not reproduced] are contemporaries, from roughly the second to the sixth century, and both are eastern Mediterranean, with a common pool of Egyptian gods and Hebrew angels; in each, the sacred name *IAV*[3] predominates. But otherwise, they are surprisingly independent, with health, specifically, the preoccupation of the (mostly iconographic) gems, while the papyri attend in addition to matters of love, money and prognostication, through elaborate word schemes of white- and black-magic manipulation. Among the magical papyri is a Coptic papyrus containing a prayer for inducing pregnancy. It is addressed to God as the creator of man 'in His own likeness' and as the one who promised 'our mother Sarah' that she would give birth. One of the types of gem amulet was that grudgingly prescribed by Alexander of Tralles (525–605) for those patients with peptic stomach who could not tolerate drugs: the amulet shows the sympathetic magic of Herakles choking back the breath of the Nemean lion.

Campbell Bonner's work on gem amulets brought him to the threshold of a large and distinctive group of copper-alloy pendant amulets now numbering well in the hundreds. Syro-Palestinian in origin, they are datable, in part through tomb finds, from the fourth to sixth centuries. Most show the generic magic of the Holy Rider[4] and the Much-Suffering Eye of Envy,[5] augmented by a relatively short menu of apotropaic acclamations and power names, though some specifically target stomach problems. Iconographically related and roughly contemporary is a smaller, more homogeneous series of hematite intaglios, which by medium, technique and function form a late subgroup among the gem amulets. Their potency is more specifically directed against threat to the parturient womb and to the new mother from the arch she-demon Abyzou. Thus the magically styptic medium 'bloodstone' and thus the dominance of the Abyzou-impaling 'Solomon' Holy Rider, though occasional examples bear instead the standing

figure of Christ Emmanuel, various individual saints, or the guardian Archangel Michael with the Long Cross.

Much less familiar among scholars, though in fact as common, are late antique amulets in glass, either oval intaglios or stamped 'cameo' pendants. Slightly broader in their pattern of distribution and slightly earlier in date than the metal and mineral Holy Riders, they are much more varied in their imagery and much less thoroughly magical, relying (when they are amuletic at all) mostly on solar images, on some fairly tepid religious power symbols, such as the *Chrismon*, and on the sympathetic magic of Old Testament salvation *historiolae*, such as the Sacrifice of Isaac. Much the same is true of cast-lead pendant amulets, which because they were simple, impersonal and 'mass-produced', probably serviced similar consumer needs. Whatever findspot evidence exists points again towards the eastern Mediterranean, but although Old and New Testament salvation imagery, such as the Raising of Lazarus, appears in this medium and format as well, there is something much more specifically amuletic about lead pendants than about their glass counterparts. Moreover, while glass was by the sixth century disappearing as a medium for amulets, lead seems only then to have been coming into its own and it continued well beyond late antiquity.

Unlike glass and lead, which as media were incidental to amuletic potency, silver, like hematite, was in late antiquity a magical material of choice, apparently because of its responsiveness, through tarnishing, to the 'monthly flux of women'. It and an impressive arsenal of magical images and words unite a small but iconographically rich group of amuletic rings and pendants datable from the sixth century to the eighth, and localizable, again, to the eastern Mediterranean. The rings are characterized by an inscribed octagonal hoop, and by an over-sized, round bezel with a non-sealing intaglio – a bezel which, but for being a bit smaller and simpler, and for being decorated on one side only, is substantially identical to the rarer pendant version of the amulet type. And both have much in common with the incised discs characteristic of a series of two dozen or so amuletic armbands of similar date and origin. The armbands appear about as frequently in copper alloy as in silver, but those in copper will often show just a single disc, and that disc will usually bear the Holy Rider as on the metal pendants. And this disc type, too, will appear in a ring-bezel version which serves to demonstrate how densely interrelated and how chronologically and geographically concentrated is the stuff of late antique material magic.

What do these several groups of amulets have in common, besides the fact that all were made to be worn or carried on the body? They may all be localized to Syria–Palestine or Egypt, and all may be dated from the fourth to the seventh century, with concentration in the fifth and sixth centuries. Their potency is generally multivalent and their range of amuletic images, symbols, words and phrases rich and varied. In addition to the Holy Rider, the Evil Eye, the Archangel with Long Cross, and the Old and New Testament salvation *historiolae* already mentioned, this range comprises:

- 'ring signs' or *characters*[6] of the sort common among the gem amulets, including the *pentalpha* device of King Solomon's magical seal ring;[7]
- the abdominally, gynaecologically targeted Chnoubis,[8] plus the running lion and the crawling snake;
- the *Heis Theos* or 'One God' apotropaic acclamation, the *Chrismon*, the *Chi-Mu-Gamma* formula, the word *Hygieia* ('Health'), the *Trisagion* and especially Psalm 90 ('He that dwells in the protection of the Most High...');
- a variety of sacred names, including *IAW*, *Sabaoth*, Emmanuel and the names of the Archangels;
- and a few bear the 'Flee, flee, flee, O detested one...' adjuration, or the incantation against the wandering womb, the 'black and blackening,' that crawls like a snake, roars like a lion and hisses like a dragon, that it might 'lie still like a lamb'.

There is sensitivity in late antiquity to what the amulet is made of, with green jasper, iron, silver and hematite (among others) all chosen on different occasions for their presumed magical powers (the last of these, for the 'persuasive parallel' that it, as an iron oxide, can hold its 'blood' red within its shiny black skin); and there is sensitivity, as well, to how the amulet is shaped, with the octagon, especially, the preferred outline for the hoops of amuletic rings. Again, Alexander of Tralles prescribes an amulet in the treatment of colic:

> Take an iron ring and make its hoop eight-sided, and write thus on the octagon: 'Flee, flee, O bile, the lark is pursuing you.'

Besides the smattering of biblical vignettes, and the sacred names and symbols already mentioned, overt Christianity penetrated a still heavily pre-Christian magical vocabulary initially in the form of the apotropaic power of the Cross. In the words of an inscribed sixth-century Syrian house lintel: 'for as long as the Cross is set in front of it, the Evil Eye will not have power'. This functional equation of the Cross with the Much-Suffering Eye of Envy is made explicit on a few otherwise typical Holy Rider pendant amulets, where a conflated Christ/Cross takes the side usually occupied by the Evil Eye *apotropion*.

Drawing on quite a different Christological potency, the group of amuletic armbands introduced above complements the power of the Chnoubis, the ring signs and Psalm 90 with a narrative iconographic charm comprising half-a-dozen episodes from the Life of Christ, beginning with the Annunciation and ending with the Ascension. These scenes are, by choice and by specific iconography, drawn not directly from the Gospels, but from *locus sanctus* imagery developed for the *eulogiai* or 'blessings' of sacred oil and earth brought back by visitors from the famous pilgrimage shrines of the Holy Land.[9] Their power to protect may be intrinsic in the manner of the Christ-miracle amulet from

Adana (in south-eastern Asia Minor) discussed below, and is certainly *at least* associative, since we know from the inscriptions on such 'souvenirs', and from pilgrim diaries and saints' lives describing their use, that narrative scenes in general functioned as amulets to protect the Holy Land traveller in transit, and to heal him, by way of contact with their contagion-empowered medium, once he got there.

Among the New Testament stories with the greatest power of 'persuasive analogy' is the miracle of the Woman with the Issue of Blood, a healing that in the Gospel account itself comes as close to the essence of Graeco-Roman magic as any in the Bible. In a sixth- or seventh-century intaglio amulet traditionally attributed to Egypt, the healing power of the original event is reconveyed through image and word, and through the object's very medium again, the sympathetic 'styptic magic' of hematite. The same miracle appears among a half-dozen others on a well-known early Byzantine gold amulet from Adana; here, however, the Christological picture cycle as a whole may be said to function amuletically, much like the Christological narrative cycle sometimes invoked in the magical papyri:

> Fly, hateful spirit! Christ pursues thee; the Son of God and the Holy Spirit have outstripped thee. O God (who healed the man at) the sheep pool, deliver from every evil thy handmaid Joannia... O Lord Christ, Son and Word of the living God, who healest every sickness and every infirmity, heal and regard thy handmaid Joannia... Chase from her and put to flight all fevers and every kind of chill, quotidian, tertian and quartan, and every evil... Upon thy name, O Lord God, have I called, the wonderful and exceeding glorious name, the terror of thy foes. Amen.

At its most basic level, this papyrus amulet draws its power from the invocation of the sacred name, and thereby from the primal, magical belief that such names share in the being and participate in the power of their bearers. But this object is magical, as well, on a secondary, 'aretalogical'[10] level, since the power of the deity, as if this were Isis, is also being invoked through a recitation of His most glorious deeds. And the same is likely true of the Adana amulet and perhaps of the armbands and the pilgrim flasks that bear the *locus sanctus* picture cycle as well, to the extent that their individual scenes may be read as sequential verses in a visual aretalogy. This method of invoking sacred power is attested among Christians as early as Origen (185?–254?), who in response to the accusation of Celsus (*c.* 170–180) that his co-religionists got their power from reciting the names of demons, countered by saying that

> It is not by incantations that Christians seem to prevail (over evil spirits), but by the name of Jesus, accompanied

by the announcement of the narratives which relate to Him; for the repetition of these has frequently been the means of driving demons out of men.

Notes

1 For the magical papyri see especially above, Ch. 6.
2 For gem amulets see above, Ch. 7.
3 A holy name in Hebrew which served as apotropaic, hence protective exclamation.
4 A type of mounted warrior, sometimes identified with Solomon. This image generally symbolized the triumph of good over evil.
5 The Much-Suffering Eye as depicted on amulets represented the eye of the malevolent individual who supposedly suffered evil on account of his envy. Being a warning for envious persons, the image was an antidote against spells.
6 Characters were cryptographic symbols inscribed next to the texts and images of the magical gems.
7 According to a tradition traceable to a Christian text of 400 CE, demons were subject to Solomon's authority. Generally considered a model of wisdom, this biblical figure was associated with magic.
8 A Graeco-Egyptian demon, depicted on magico-medical amulets as a snake with a lion's head, nimbus, rays and astrological elements.
9 Such imagery comprised a series of images narrating biblical episodes. Connected with the main pilgrimage sites of pre-Islamic Palestine, this iconography developed on 'souvenirs' (e.g. oil jars, clay tokens, reliquaries) made at the sacred places and taken home by pilgrims.
10 Aretalogy is the quasi-ritual enumeration (or 'advertisement') of the qualities, power and miracles of a deity. It was a cultic practice from the Hellenistic period onwards.

11

ANOTHER 'WRETCHED SUBJECT'

The demons of the world

David Jordan

In Chapter 2 of this volume, I discussed the often disappointing reaction of scholars to the study of Greek magic.[1] That subject, 'wretched' though it may be considered, is a rich mine for the history of ideas. Here I discuss another concept that we find in magical texts and popular superstition: the demons who control this world. It too is important for intellectual history but is equally scorned today.

One of our main sources for late Greek demonology is a short but elegantly written Platonizing dialogue, *Timotheos or on Demons*, which the manuscripts ascribe to Michael Psellos (1018–1081). In previous generations, scholars have studied it and searched for the sources of its ideas about demons.[2] The problem became immensely more complicated when the French Byzantinist Paul Gautier demonstrated in 1980 that the dialogue was not by Psellos at all.[3] This discovery by no means lessens the importance of the work, but its author, who evidently belonged to a highly literary, intellectual stratum, is now unknown, and in fact all we can say about his chronology is that he was a Christian who necessarily wrote sometime before the last years of the thirteenth century, the date of the oldest extant manuscript of the work. There are two speakers: Timotheos, who is a priest at Constantinople, and Thrax, who has returned from some time spent among Satanists and demon-worshippers. Timotheos is, of course, eager for details. Thrax replies that not all his own knowledge is first-hand: much of it comes from one Markos of Mesopotamia, once an adept at these pagan rites but now a monk 'in that part of the Chersonese that abuts Greece'.[4] Markos tells Thrax of six categories of demons, which he lists in the order of their location, from the Empyrean down to the centre of the earth. The uppermost inhabit an area known as the 'fiery' (*diapyron*), the second category the 'airy' (*aerion*), the third the 'earthly' (*chthonion*), the fourth the 'watery' (evidently fresh and salt: *hydraion* and *enalion*), the fifth the 'sub-earthly' (*hypochthonion*) and the sixth the 'light-hating and insensible' (*misophaes* and *dysaisthêton*).

No such Markos of Mesopotamia is otherwise known to us. He is no doubt fictitious, but even so we are meant to believe that he is speaking from a knowl-

edge of a tradition of beliefs about demons. Indeed, in the poem (lines 32–3) that precedes the hymns proper in manuscripts of the Orphic *Hymns*, we find a very similar list of demons:

> Demons heavenly (*ouranious*) and airy
> and earthly and sub-earthly and fire-dwelling (*empyriphoitous*).

In this introductory poem, the order is slightly different, and the 'fire-dwellers' have an odd position in the list, replacing the last 'Markan' category, the 'light-hating', which is presumably even deeper in the earth than the 'sub-earthly'. The striking term *misophaes* had long been known to philologists, but only from the phrase 'light-hating world', quoted by the neo-Platonist Proklos (fifth century), in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (III 325.32), as being from the *Chaldaean Oracles* (first or second century). Then came the publication, in 1927, of a manuscript of exorcisms in Greek, copied in May 1710 and now preserved in the National Library at Athens (MS. 825).[5] One of the exorcisms is labelled 'Prayer of our holy father Ephrem of Syria'. This is the fourth-century saint whose feast the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates on 28 January. It is difficult to know how much, if any, of the exorcism is his own work, for he wrote only in Syriac, and also there is a reference to the seven ecumenical synods (fo. 31^{b}), the last of which did not take place until 787. If the reference is a later addition and the language of the exorcism not Ephrem's own, we may wonder whether much else is original. On fo. 29^{a}, in any case, there is the phrase: 'Drive from him every evil and unclean demon, be it airy or land-born (*chersaion*) or watery or fiery or earthly or light-hating, and send it to places dry and trackless.' The 'places dry and trackless' evidently belong to the same tradition as the 'Headache Prayer' discussed in Chapter 2, but the categories seem basically to match those of 'Markos'. The correspondence is not exact, however: like the Orphic 'fire-dwellers', the 'fiery', here between the 'land-born or watery' and 'earthly', seems to be in the wrong place relative to 'Markos', and I assume that the 'land-born or watery' somehow corresponds to the 'fresh- or salt-water' of 'Markos'. What shows that his and 'Ephrem's' lists are no doubt from a single tradition is their use of the rare word 'light-hating'. That tradition, whatever it was, poses an interesting enigma.

One of my vices as a scholar, let me confess, is to work on too many projects at the same time, but this can produce the occasional reward. While wondering about the intellectual context of 'Markos' and 'Ephrem' and the phrase 'land-born or watery', I happened to be reading, in Preisendanz' edition of the magical papyri, a Christian prayer recorded by the sixth-century poet and scribe Dioskoros of Aphrodito in Upper Egypt.[6] In its main request, 'Protect me from every evil spirit and subject to me every spirit ... (and all demons) earthly (*epigaia*), sub-earthly (*hypogaia*), watery (*enydra*), and land-born, and every shadow', I noticed the same phrase. The 'earthly' and the 'sub-earthly' of the papyrus must be the inhabitants of the 'earthly' and the 'sub-earthly', respectively, of 'Markos', and for the last category of 'Markos' and 'Ephrem', i.e. the

'light-hating', Dioskoros' text has substituted a generalizing phrase. I accordingly looked elsewhere among the magical papyri for other lists of demons by category.

One of the papyri contains a wonderful exorcism ascribed to the third-century magician Pibechis.[7] It has many Jewish elements, but there is a thick Christian overlay, for one is to exorcize the demon 'by the king of the Hebrews, Jesus'. A sentence runs: 'I adjure you by the seal that Solomon placed on Jeremiah's mouth, and he spoke. You speak too, whoever you are, heavenly (*epouranion*) or airy, earthly (*epigeion*), sub-earthly, *Ebousaion*, *chersaion,* or *Pharisaion*.' In these last words the copyist, perhaps distracted for some reason, evidently thought that he had a reference to the tribe of Jebusees (*Iebousaioi*) whom the Jews found in the Promised Land (e.g. Exodus 3.8, 3.18) and to the Pharisees (*Pharisaioi*) of the New Testament. What, if anything, he thought the papyrus' *chersaion* meant is unclear. In any case, 'Pibechis'' '*heavenly*' evidently corresponds to 'Markos'' 'fiery', the 'sub-earthly or earthly' (as one category) to his 'sub-earthly', the *Ebousaion* or *chersaion* to 'Ephrem's' 'land-born or watery' and the *Pharisaion* conceivably to the *misophaes*, the 'light-hating', a rare term that an ignorant or careless scribe might easily corrupt.

Another papyrus has a prayer addressed to an invisible god with an Egyptian-sounding name, Osoronnophris, who is also called 'Headless' and 'Adonaï'.[8] The prayer ends: 'Subject all demons to me, in order that obedient to me shall be every demon heavenly and etherial (*aitherios*) and earthly and sub-earthly and land-born and watery and every enchantment and whip of God.' Again, if we allow 'Ephrem's' 'land-born or watery' to correspond to 'Markos'' 'fresh- and salt-water', we have, even if the order is not the same, the first five 'Markan' categories, followed by a generalizing phrase.

As Table 11.1, this is all a little easier to see.

'Markos'	*'Euphrem'*	*Dioskoros*	*'Pibechis'*	*Prayer to Osoronnophris*
1 fiery	1 airy		1 heavenly	1 heavenly
2 airy	2 land-born or watery		2 airy	2 etherial
3 earthly		1 earthly	3 earthly	3 earthly
4 fresh- and salt-water	3 fiery	3 fresh- and salt-water	4 sub-earthly (*hypogion*) or earthly (*katachthonion*)	4 sub-earthly (*hypogeios*)
5 sub-earthly	4 earthly	2 sub-earthly	5 Eboussaion or land-born	5 land-born and watery
6 light-hating and insensible	5 light-hating	4 every shadow	6 *Pharisaion*	6 every incantation and whip of God

Table 11.1 [table title here]
Note: The numerals show the order within the individual lists.

Thanks to the late Athenian manuscript with 'Ephrem's' exorcism, we are put onto a path that enables us to observe that 'Markos'' categories of demons find ready parallels in the magical papyri, chiefly in prayers or exorcisms with Jewish or Christian overtones. Its word 'light-hating' points even farther, however. As I wrote above, the adjective is known from the phrase 'light-hating world' quoted by Proklos from the *Chaldaean Oracles*.[9] These last, attested today only in fragmentary quotations, consist of hexameters dating to the first and second centuries of our era and attributed to one Julian 'the theurge'; like certain of the Platonic dialogues, they were the subject of a commentary by Proklos. Little over a generation ago, we knew none of the context of the phrase 'light-hating world'. In 1969, however, H.D. Saffrey published, from an important tenth-century manuscript of Aristotle, a previously unnoticed scholium consisting of four lines of verse entitled simply *logion*, a term often used to refer to the Chaldaean hexameters:

> Do not hasten towards the turbulent, light-hating world of matter, where are murder and dissensions and the generation of troublesome vapours and parching sicknesses and putrefactions and eliminations: he who is going to cherish Father Nous must flee these things.[10]

One of the principal forces in the cosmology of the *Chaldaean Oracles* is the 'Father Nous' in line 4. The lower, light-hating 'cosmos', we may infer, is part of that same system and stands in opposition, perhaps as the extreme contrast, to 'Father Nous'. We may cautiously ask whether all six classes of demons have their place in this 'Chaldaean' theology. Four of the classes, in any case, obviously correspond to the traditional four cosmic elements: fire, air, earth and water. But in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, Proklos, drawing on Plato as his source, tells us that the number six is more appropriate for the human being: s/he has a front and a back, an above and a below, and a left and a right. Therefore the universe, of which man is the microcosm, must also have six corresponding parts. It is in Proklos' discussion of this doctrine that he quotes the phrase 'light-hating world' from the hexameters above, as if to illustrate what Plato has just espoused. It is tempting to think that when the author of the *Timotheos or on Demons* invented the character Markos who told Thrax about the six categories of demons, his attribution of a Mesopotamian origin to Markos was his hint to us that Markos got his knowledge from the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

Here too we can say more and shall end our discussion, as in Chapter 2, with a question. The traditional four elements, we are told, go back to Empedokles.[11] Even before the publication of the Paris manuscript with its oracular poetry, lines 2 and 3, with their description of the ills of the 'light-hating world', were already known from Proklos himself, who, in his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, attributes them to Empedokles. This at least is what we read in the manuscripts of that commentary. As Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf has shown,[12] the manuscripts of Proklos' work are incomplete, however, and report

only excerpts of an original longer commentary, now lost, on the *Republic*; Proklos' source for the two lines, he argued, was probably not in fact Empedokles, but some other body of writing that Proklos was in the habit of quoting alongside Empedokles, a source that the compilers of the manuscripts' excerpts of Proklos neglected to record. The likeliest would be the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which indeed Proklos quotes in the same breath with Empedokles to support his discussion in his commentary on the *Timaeus*:

> Thus too in the *Republic* (IX 621A) he refers to the river Lethe as being the entire generative nature, in which there is Forgetfulness (*lêthê*) and 'the meadow of Bewilderment', as Empedokles says (fr. 121 Diels),[13] and 'the turbulence of matter' and 'the light-hating world', as the gods [i.e. the Chaldaean oracles] say.

For the student of ancient philosophy, one of the most important of recent developments has been the publication of a papyrus from Panopolis in Egypt.[14] Its date is the second century before our era, and it contains several columns of the poetry of Empedokles – the work itself, not merely extracts from it. Scholars must now rethink their assumptions about the influence of Empedokles on later philosophy, for the papyrus shows, beyond any doubt, that his work was available and could be read and enjoyed even in the early centuries of the Roman Empire. It would certainly have been available to the composer of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. When we reread the *Oracles* and ponder again the question of the sources of their doctrines, should we not now bear in mind the possibility that even though Proklos himself may have taken his description of the 'light-hating world' and his information about the six divisions of the world not from Empedokles but from the *Oracles*, the composer of the *Oracles* himself was drawing on the doctrines of Empedokles and that those six categories of demons that we saw in the 'Markos' of the Pseudo-Psellos, in 'Ephrem' and in the magical papyri originated in the teachings of that most remarkable of pre-Socratic philosophers?

Notes

1 See above, pp. 6–9.
2 In particular Svobada 1927.
3 Gautier 1980: 105–94.
4 Ibid., 148 n. 29 suggests that this may refer to the Chalkidike. Have we an allusion to Mt Athos?
5 Delatte 1927: 250–62. It was Delatte who prepared the Athenian fascicle (*Codices athenienses* [Brussels 1924]) of the *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum* referred to in Ch. 2 above.
6 Preisendanz 1974, no. 13a. The prayer has been re-edited by MacCoull 1987: 95–7; see now Jordan 2001: 87–90 (the words *ἔννδρα σκιάν* form an iambic trimeter). A good treatment of Dioskoros' life and cultural milieu is MacCoull 1988.
7 Preisendanz 1974, IV 3007–86. For the magician see Preisendanz 1941: 1310–12.

8 Preisendanz 1974, V 99–172, esp. 165–70.
9 The most recent and convenient edition is Budé 1971.
10 Saffrey 1969: 59–72, esp. 64–7.
11 For a good and sympathetic recent account of Empedokles and his doctrine, see Kingsley 1995.
12 Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1929: 626–61, 637–8; cf. Saffrey 1969: 65–7.
13 The full verse, which Proklos quotes in his commentary on Plato's *Republic* (II 157.24), is: 'through the meadow of Bewilderment in darkness they stray'.
14 Martin and Primavesi 1999.

12

THE MAGICIAN VIGRINOS AND HIS VICTIM

A case of magic from the *Life of St Andrew the Fool*

George Th. Calofonos

By following an extreme and quite rare form of Christian *ascesis*, the 'fools' – lunatics, that is, for Christ's sake – often found themselves beyond the limits of what was socially and religiously acceptable.[1] Their stereotyped behaviour, which even today is recognized as a symptom of mental illness, featured sudden swings from aggression to extreme exhilaration, refusal to wear clothing, disregard for rules of propriety and hygiene and aimless wandering; owing to such behaviour, their contemporaries considered them possessed and treated them as social outcasts, a fact which helped them gain eternal life. Their saintliness was known to only a few – perhaps only to their biographer or to no one at all – and the statistically improbable possibility of a saint lurking behind any outcast and possessed person undermined the certainties of social conventions, stressing the deceptiveness of appearances.

The *Life of St Andrew the Fool* is also in many ways a deceptive text. Concerning a fifth-century Constantinopolitan saint, it purports to have been written by a contemporary biographer personally acquainted with Andrew. In reality it is a later work, based on the surviving Life of another fool, that of Symeon (a seventh-century work concerning a sixth-century saint). Composed most probably in the tenth century,[2] the *Life of Andrew* is largely a hagiographic novel, in which the unconventionality of the fool's life-history is counterbalanced by the utterly conventional presence of Epiphanios' aristocratic and pious student, who subsequently became Patriarch of Constantinople. The elegance of the episodes is complemented by the edifying and, therefore, didactic aims of the author. Here, I shall concentrate on an extensive episode involving magic in this text, a fascinating story of demonic deception, where nothing is what it seems (ll. 2425–47, ed. Rydén):

> A pious woman, despairing of her unfaithful husband, who not only dissipated his fortune through his regular visits to brothels, but had acquired a

permanent mistress, thought of finding a spiritual father to help her bring him to his senses. Following the advice of a friend, she approached a certain Vigrinos, a man who could fulfil any of her wishes. Having waited patiently for her turn while a large crowd appealed to this man, she stated her problem and asked for his help, promising to reward him according to her means. He asked her what she wanted her husband to suffer: he could make him impotent, bring about his death or order a demon to possess him. The woman answered that all she desired was for him to make her husband love her and her alone. Vigrinos assured her that he would do so, and asked her to have an oil-lamp, a wick, a girdle and a fire ready at home, where she was to expect him on Wednesday. In the meantime he proved his powers to her by relating her entire life from birth up to that time.

On Wednesday he visited her home. Mumbling unintelligible words, he filled the oil-lamp with oil, inserted the wick, and having placed it in front of the icons of the house, he lit it. Then, again whispering certain invocations, he tied four knots on the girdle and gave it to the woman, telling her always to wear it with her undergarments. As payment he demanded a *trimesio*,[3] which he would distribute to the poor. She gave it to him, and promised him more if she were to see results. Indeed, from that day on her husband stopped desiring other women and became a model spouse.

Within six days, however, the woman started having disturbing dreams. In the first, she found herself alone in a plain. Suddenly, she was approached by an elderly Ethiopian who told her he was her new husband and was consumed by the desire for her and tried to rape her. While fighting him off, she woke up terrified and wondered what it was that had brought the devil so near to her. She soon fell asleep again, only to find herself in the bosom of a large black dog which caressed her like a human and kissed her on the mouth. She woke up disgusted, crying out, 'Alas, Satan has fallen in love with me.' A few days later, she dreamt she was at the hippodrome and was kissing the ancient statues which adorned it. Feeling a brazen attraction towards them, she started embracing the statues, trying to make love to them. In another dream she again saw a dog which took her away. In yet another she was consuming the filthiest of animals: lizards, snakes, frogs and others, even worse. Being unable to rest in her sleep, and not knowing what else to do, she began fasting and praying, asking God to rid her of these afflictions.

In the course of her fasts she again had a dream. She stood before her icons and prayed, but they were positioned the wrong way, so that she was facing west instead of east. While she prayed, a young man appeared before her to reveal the cause of her tribulations. He showed her the icons and told her: 'See what this ghastly magician has done to you.' And then she noticed that the icons were covered in excrement and gave off an incredible stench. The

youth revealed to her that the cause of all this was Vigrinos, who had desecrated the icons, turning them into plain wood and paint. 'The grace of God', he told her, 'has departed, not being able to stand the demons' stench.' The woman noticed that the oil-lamp was full of dog's urine, and that the name of the Antichrist had been carved on the wick's base, and above it were the words 'Demons' sacrifice'. She woke up in tears, pitying herself for her gullibility.

Wondering what to do, she turned to the young Epiphanios, whose piety she well knew. He advised her to burn the girdle with the knots, break the oil-lamp and give him the defiled icons, although he knew that the demons would thereby turn against him. Having done what Epiphanios advised, the woman dreamt of the Ethiopian covered in burns, standing at the threshold of her home, not daring to come in. When another Ethiopian, who was passing by, asked him how he had ended up in this predicament, he bewailed the fact that the wife to whom his master had bound him with four knots, was no longer his because of Epiphanios. Thereupon an army of red demons attacked Epiphanios in his sleep. At first they tempted him with erotic dreams which consumed him with desire, but his virtuous nature helped him resist. Then they took the shape of wild beasts which terrified him by chasing him and threatening to devour him, but Epiphanios, summoning the weapon of prayer, raised his arms to heaven, and then, in a flash, a huge hunting net fell from above and the red demons scattered in terror.

The next morning the woman looked for Epiphanios to tell him she had got rid of the demons, and to thank him. He turned to St Andrew the Fool, his spiritual father, who already knew of the case in all its details. Answering his disciple's questions, Andrew revealed to him that demons often employed magic for apparently benign purposes but with the ultimate aim of making unsuspecting persons susceptible to their influence. He explained the symbolism of the ritual which the magician Vigrinos had followed to entrap his victim. He had used the magical counterparts of the components of Christian baptism but with the aim of nullifying it. The oil-lamp symbolized the font; the water and oil therein, the water of the font and the holy oil; the wick, the candles which were lit during the sacrament; the girdle, finally, stood for the ribbon worn by the novice. The saint also explained to his disciple the way in which the magician managed to defile and neutralize the holy icons. He secretly spread on them his pulverized excrement, which he also placed inside the oil-lamp, using it as his personal sacrifice to the demons. With these explanations and an analysis of the means by which magicians look into the past, this highly informative if somewhat disgusting episode draws to a close.

The point of this story, which as noted, was written in the tenth century, apparently was to provide support for the Church's established position that there was no such thing as good or bad magic, a position which, as Spyros Trojanos

demonstrates in Chapter 9 of this volume, was introduced in secular legislation of the same period. The seemingly beneficent act of bringing an unfaithful husband to his senses by relatively harmless means – the lighting of an oil-lamp in front of icons and the tying of four knots in a girdle by an ostensibly pious person – in reality paves the way to the forces of darkness. This, however, is not easy to understand.

Unlike Andrew the Fool – a social outcast possessed by demons – the magician Vigrinos presents himself as a sought-after and devout person. People flock to his house, and he supposedly donates his fees to the poor. The woman's dealings with him do not appear to be marginal or secret, but take place quite openly. Her friend's recommendations concerning the magician, her waiting in his ante-room for her turn, the rehearsal of her problem, the negotiation of a fee, the promise of an additional payment should the procedure prove effective: this entire process appears to be a normal part of her everyday life. And when the magical act is performed, bringing about the desired result, the woman does not even realize she did anything wrong. All would have been fine save for her dreams.

It is only a series of repulsive erotic dreams that indicates to the woman that something is wrong. The infatuated Ethiopian and the wild black dog appearing in her sleep are such potent symbols that she realizes that a demon is pursuing her.[4] Initially, the dreamer attempts to resist this pursuit. However, as the dreams proceed, her own desires are aroused. She now experiences in her sleep an impure attraction to the ancient statues of the hippodrome, a place traditionally associated with magic.[5] The statues, traditionally haunted by ancient magicians, were offensive to people of the time, because of both their demonic nature and their indecent nudity;[6] these become objects of her desire. The woman's gradual surrender to the demon is also stressed by dreams of boundless desire for every kind of filthy food.[7] Epiphanios' dreams, caused by the army of red demons, also belong to the demonic domain. Like the woman's dreams, they refer to the Platonic theory of the tripartite soul, as adapted by Evagrios of Pontus to the Christian concept of the demonic dreaming. Apart from the erotic dreams arising when demons attack the *appetitive*, Epiphanios also suffers from terrifying dreams of wild beasts, which, according to Evagrios, correspond to an attack on the *passionate part of the soul* (*PG* 40, col. 1245–8). Unlike the anonymous woman, Epiphanios does not simply endure the demons' attacks nor succumb to desire or terror. He succeeds in facing the demons in the same dream by taking action, which is a mark of great sanctity according to John of Sinai, the eminent ascetic writer of the seventh century (26.37, *PG* 88).

The unfortunate woman, on the other hand, is powerless to resist the demon's attacks in her sleep, nor does she know what really caused them. The revelation comes again through dreams, God-sent this time. Her guide in the dream, the young man, is obviously her guardian angel, as often happens in dreams recorded in contemporary sources.[8] The magnitude of the disaster is gradually revealed to her: first, the reverse direction of her prayer (she is facing west), then the actual

state of her icons (covered with excrement) and finally the cause of all this (the satanic oil-lamp filled with dog urine). The demonic – i.e., the result of magic – is expressed by a reversal of Christian terms: black instead of white, west instead of east, stench instead of fragrance. The reality of appearances is expressed only in the dream. What is more, the same is true of the next dream, where the demon confesses his defeat after the magical implements are destroyed. Here another reversal is apparent: the four knots on the woman's girdle did not 'tie' her husband to her, as one would expect, but rather bound the voluptuous demon himself.

At the end of the episode Andrew explains theologically, or rather demonologically, the inverted world of magic adumbrated through dreams. The magician's ritual constitutes the cancellation of the Christian ritual. By means of a kind of symbolic Satanic liturgy he submits his victim to a 'black' baptism, which denies her the protection provided by Christian baptism. In order to make the catastrophe complete, he defiles more objects of protection, the holy icons of his victim's home, by spraying them with his own dried excrement, which he also burns as a form of Satanic incense intended to attract demons.

The existence of Satanic icons and 'black' rituals, which conceal, behind the façade of a Christian devotional act, an appeal to demons and the performance of magic, is already mentioned by Neilos the Hermit, a fifth-century Church Father:

> Having constructed the icons of certain supposed saints, the magicians (charmers), after taking certain female demons hostages, insert them, by some trick, on the back of the icons, and when they wish to make a woman commit adultery, or intend to kill someone, or make a horse weak, they observe an accursed and execrable fast and lie awake before the icon, having lit candles and lamps, and remain there, calling upon the demons until they appear.
>
> (*PG* 79, col. 308)

These magicians closely resemble Vigrinos. They conceal their demonic aims behind a false piety: instigating adultery, magical murder, or the annihilation by magical means of the opposing team at the races, which was very common in the early period. Vigrinos had himself suggested solutions of a similar malice to the deceived wife. Of course the icons here are fakes, prepared in advance for magical purposes. Nevertheless, the desecration of the woman's icons by Vigrinos ultimately produced the same result: the Christian icons lost God's grace and attracted the demons. It is a telling detail that when Epiphanios takes the desecrated icons, he is aware that he will bring the demons to him. The rest of the ritual – the lighting of lamps and the invocations before the magical icons, as well as the vigil and fast – just like Vigrinos' ritual, does not in the least betray its demonic nature, thus providing the magicians not only with a cover but also with the ability to deceive the gullible faithful.

Another story, from the eleventh century this time, presents an icon which participates in an activity that straddles faith and magic. It is the icon of Christ 'Antiphonetes', which, as Michael Psellos (6.64–7, ed. Renauld) informs us, was made by the empress Zoë Porphyrogennete (see Figure 6). She spent all her days preparing rare aromatic substances, which – Psellos intimates – she burnt before this icon[9] (one hopes their composition differed from Vigrinos' perverse 'incense'). Zoë, according to Psellos, used the icon to foresee the future, asking it questions and receiving answers from the changes in its colours. Despite Psellos' assurances that all this was the product of excessive piety, he clearly implies that the empress was involved in magical acts. Her construction of the icon, as well as her use of special incense, were no doubt strong indications of guilt to the suspicious reader of the time.

Like the empress Zoë and the anonymous humble heroine of the episode in question, women often play a leading role in episodes involving magic in ancient and Byzantine literature. Their limited social role did not give them much influence, and this applied even in the case of the empress, who spent the greater part of her life secluded in her quarters. Magic must therefore have been one of the few solutions on offer to gain some control over their lives, as indeed was piety. The deceived wife who had recourse to Vigrinos had no other means of reacting to her husband's adultery, a situation which also had financial repercussions in as much as the husband was squandering their fortune on whores. Beyond the possibility of revenge (by rendering the husband impotent or possessed), the magician offered her the chance of killing him. This would have been quite acceptable to other women in her predicament, in an era when divorce was not available.

The unnamed heroine did not desire anything of the kind. She only wanted her husband back. She did not even suspect that Vigrinos was a magician. She was a victim of her own gullibility, which, in any case, seems rather exaggerated. Even if in another episode of his Life, Andrew the Fool himself threatened a sinner with possession (in order to bring him to his senses), Vigrinos' offer to have her husband put to death ought to have aroused her suspicions. We must not, however, overlook the prominence, in this episode, of the woman's salvation from the demons' influence, which Epiphanios' intervention achieves; hence she has to appear devout and consequently worthy of salvation, while being a victim of the magician.

On the other hand, in a world where the Christian faith was a given and not a matter of choice, the boundaries between faith and gullibility, piety and superstition, prayer and magical incantation, miracle and magic, were not always strictly defined.[10] It is possible that the author of the *Life* wished to point out precisely this to his readers, thereby offering us a glimpse of how magic operated in practice, or even of how a devout Byzantine may have *thought* it functioned.

Figure 6 The empress Zoë (detail): Was she really a witch? Mosaic, 11th century, Haghia Sophia, Istanbul

Notes

1 On fools see Angelidi 1993.
2 On the *Life* in general and the problems of dating it more particularly, see vol. I of the Rydén edition.
3 Byzantine coin.
4 For the appearance in dreams of demons in the form of Ethiopians (meaning blacks) see Karpozilos 1993: 74–6.
5 Magoulias 1967.
6 Mango 1963.
7 *Republic* 9. 476A-D. Similar bulimic dreams of unclean foods are mentioned in Plato.
8 As e.g. the dream of Emperor Romanos I (Theophanes Continuatus 438–9, ed. Bekker), or that of Romanos II as appears from the correspondence of the dignitary Theodore Daphnopates (letters 15 and 16, ed. Darrouzés-Westerink).
9 Here I follow Duffy 1995.
10 See Kazhdan 1995 on the problem of distinguishing miracle from magic; also Fögen 1995, on the changes between the early and late Byzantine periods.

13

SPELLS AND EXORCISMS IN THREE POST-BYZANTINE MANUSCRIPTS

Agamemnon Tselikas

The so-called magic texts – spells or exorcisms – have a long tradition going back to the dawn of time. We find them in ancient Greek inscriptions, on scrolls and in many manuscripts from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine eras, and especially in medical codices and some prayer-books. This co-existence is explained by the fact that many compilers of medical prescriptions and authors of medical collections considered it essential to copy these texts as additional help in relieving the pain and anxiety of others in the face of the unknown and the uncontrollable.

From time to time, such texts have been the object of study by philologists, but chiefly by folklorists and ethnologists. We are still far from having a full overview of these texts and a systematic classification into chronological periods, and we are unable to determine their precise origins. It is nevertheless clear, even from a cursory reading, that during the Hellenistic period and the subsequent Roman domination in the East the beliefs and superstitions of many Mediterranean peoples came to the fore. Later too, in the Christian era, pagan material survives intensely and continuously, despite attempts to adapt to and harmonize with the new religion by reference to saints and other sacred names, though this did not mean that such texts were acceptable to the Church. As Spyros Trojanos discusses in Chapter 9 of this volume, several Church canons strictly condemn their use by lay persons and clergy alike. Human curiosity, however, and innate superstition proved to be stronger than prohibitions and hence numerous texts strayed from the canons of both the official prayer-book and classical medical writings. The conflation of phrases, words and names originating from different cultures and their mainly oral diffusion at once raise a philological problem. Thus in many cases their identification is impossible, as is their reduction to a crystallized form. These are fluid and complementary texts, poorly composed and unintelligible, both to those who memorized them and to those who copied them. This was surely due to their

apocryphal nature, which did not in any case appear strange, but on the contrary was in tune with the whole atmosphere in which they were used, like something paradoxical and beyond common logic, since this was exactly what those who resorted to their use needed.

We shall quote below specimens of such texts, selecting them from two manuscripts, one of the early nineteenth century from the Peloponnese (Dimitsana; see Figure 7) and the other of the mid-sixteenth century from central Greece (Lamia). Both are medical manuscripts and their authors, in keeping with their task of copying medical prescriptions, cite these texts with the same sense of seriousness and responsibility towards their readers. They may not be totally unknown to specialists, and certain variations have probably been published from other oral or written sources. We also cite, from a law-canon manuscript of the late sixteenth century, the canons of the Church which condemned those who dealt with spells and other magical acts. This manuscript comes from the Prousos Monastery in Eurytania, though the text occurs in several other similar manuscripts.

The Dimitsana Manuscript

For love of a woman

When you wish to love a woman, repeat these words nineteen times: 'Let none [fem.] remain in me.' Take three times in your mouth[1] and spit inside, and spit [sc. it] in food or drink and give it to her to eat or drink. And when you want to spit you should utter her name.

To make a woman love you

Take a piece of paper or dry cloth and write these characters [... ... ...] on the cloth or paper and mix it with water or wine and give it to the woman you want to drink, and she will love you much.

If you want to make a woman love no other man

Take the egg of a turtle-dove and beat it and when you want to lie with your woman daub your mouth and she won't desire another. Your woman must do the same so that her man will not love another woman.

So that a woman does not bear a child

When a woman does not want to become pregnant, write these characters at the waning of the moon: α ξ β δ χ σ θ ω ξ η θ γ ω π ϕ ε γ χ. The woman does not get pregnant when she holds them on her. But her husband must not know it. And if you wish to test this, tie these characters on any tree you want, and it will not bear fruit or will dry up completely.

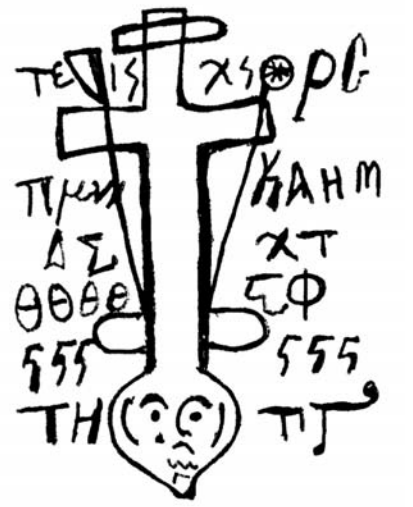

Figure 7 Magic symbols. Dimitsana MS., nineteenth century

For a thief

Write the following characters on bay leaves and give them to those you suspect and whoever has the object cannot make use of it and confesses it: β β β τ ο υ ρ ε ο ρ ς φ β.

For a person with jaundice[2]

When someone has jaundice, take pure wine and place it in a jug and put inside a gold coin and place it out to the stars at nightfall. Read the following wish in the morning:

> As the Virgin Mary left the Mount of Olives with thousands of angels and archangels, Oktor came across her and did not greet her and went his way. The Virgin turned round and said to him: 'Where are you going, Oktar, green and yellow, death's companion and Charon's brother?' Oktor then turned round and said to her: 'The mountains saw me and fled, the trees saw me and were uprooted and you stand there and ask me where I am going? I am going to such-and-such man, to enter his navel, to rush into his side, to enter his liver.' The Virgin Mary, Mother of God, replied to him thus: I abjure you first by the grace of my son and secondly by the twenty-four letters that the sun has in its heart, depart to the mountains and caves and the depths of the sea and the underworld. Go there to eat and choke, there to vent your anger, because this man is baptized, anointed and has surrendered to my son and thus hold your anger.

For a court of law

When you want to win your case in court against your opponent, you should say:

> Leaving my home and going my way with the Archangel Michael on my right and the Archangel Gabriel on my left and mouths and tongues talking against the servant of God (name) should stop. Prophet Daniel, you who once tied up the lions' mouths in the pit, tie up the mouth of the judge and direct his anger onto my opponent's head.

And to make your enemy have no strength to harm you, write his name on a bay leaf and place it under your foot inside your shoe and he will have no more strength to harm you.

Another

If you have an enemy and you are afraid, recite David's psalm 74, the 'O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?' the whole psalm and write down these characters on a blank paper: σχ δχ πε λε κ ψ λι κλ ψ χχ. And say the following:

> Come, Archangel Michael, Gabriel, turn him away, Urael, prevent him, Raphael, hold him, let his path be dark and slippery and let the angel of the Lord pursue him. Depart, leave the servant of God (name), unfordable river, impassable bush. May Christ and his mother with all the saints be with you to obstruct him.

For fever

Holy John, Prophet and Baptist of our Lord Jesus Christ, your holy head set sweetly on a platter and bringing shivers to the onlookers, your holy head cried out and said: Fever[3] of the third and fourth degree, daytime and nocturnal, leave the servant of God (name) ς Δ ς μ ϕ β θ. *Ili Ili lama savachthani*, my God, my God, why you have forsaken me, your servant? Christ brought the good news – go away, shiver, Christ was born – go away, shudder, Christ was baptized, go away, shiver, Christ has risen from the dead – go away, shiver. Christ has risen from his servant (name). Christ the Victor reigns for ever. Then write down the present seal of the cross.

For a patient who cannot sleep

Take a piece of tile, let it be from a church, and write with the holy spear these letters:

> God the holy when Adam was asleep in paradise and when He put to sleep Abimelek in Agrippa's vineyard and the seven youths in the cave at Ephesos,

bring sleep to the servant of God (name) in the sleep of life in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, amen.

Write these letters with the characters and put them under his pillow. Furthermore write David's fourth psalm together with the characters: ε ξ σ χ φ σ κ θ and put them on the threshold of the door and say the following: The house of Raphael is new, the citizen of God, and the seller Diomides, Eugeneios, Symvatios, Stephanos, Provatios, the Lord God Savaoth.

In order to bind your enemy and not fear him

Find a live ass or foal and cut its tongue by three fingers in the front. Place it on a clean plate and beat the tongue to powder. And when it is pulverized keep it in a paper and put it in the coffee, food or water or wine of your enemy and give him to drink and he no longer dares speak to you, he only fears you.

To separate two friends

To separate two very dear friends or a woman from a man, take a five metre candle and take it to Saint Xorinos,[4] make a prayer in the name of the person or the woman. You take earth from the sanctuary of the church and after leaving the church you should not pass through any other door. And if you do you should leave the earth outside. And leaving take it with you, until you reach the house of the man or woman and you place it under her doorway and when she crosses it she no longer turns to look at her man and the man his woman.

Another

In order to separate two friends, so that they may not like each other again, take forty drams of holy candle and hairs from a black dog and knead them well and break them into bits and make two human effigies, if they are men, and if they are women, two women's faces. Repeat these words twenty-one times: Enzeher, Enzeher, Enzehir. And tie these idols back to back with seven kinds of silk and place them in their doorways so that these friends cross over them and they separate completely. And while kneading say the names above.

Another

In order to separate two dear friends, take three bay leaves and write on each one a pentacle. Take from dead soil from the head a measure and recite the 'Our Father' twice. And [sc. take] from the legs another measure and say from the 'Our Father' eight words, two from the middle. And you grind the leaves with the soil and take it on a Saturday when the moon is thirty days old or twenty and on whatever day you knead the soil, make a brick and go to the river, find a stone and

break it on it saying thus: As the dead were separated from the living, thus let so and so separate from so and so, woman or man. And they separate for sure.

For dead children

When a woman has children who have died, on the twenty-fifth of December when Christ is born, who the same day he is baptized on the morrow, not because there are two baptisms on the first day St John, on the second Christ, you cut four oranges in the font where Christ is baptized, and when the priest has finished and the Christians bring oranges, go home and bury one [sc. orange] in every corner and leave them and do not disturb them and God willing you will have a child and it will live.

To release a married couple

In order to release a married couple, take bile from a raven and essence[5] in equal parts and let the man smear his entire body and write the Pentecost hymn so that he can keep it on him. It breaks the binding spell and cools the flame and so forth. And then let him lie with his woman and the divination [i.e. spell] is dissolved.

Another

In order to release a married couple bound by a spell, take sulphur, pepper, holy candle, oil, bay leaves, lemon juice, salt from Vlachs and ashes, make these into a pie and let the husband take half and the wife the other half and on each piece write: 'They were opened for you, Lord' and the binding spell is broken. Let them tie the hymns in their entirety tightly on their belly, performing three hundred genuflections of penitence and let them sleep and they break [sc. the spell].

Another for release

Take deer's skin and write the following and let the man wrap it on his thigh and let the woman, rolling it, do the same: God who released the heavens, release your servants (names)... The one who untied Christ's garments let him untie and release the servant of God (name) and the servant of God (female). It breaks the binding spell.

Write on a paper the 'He who rose from the tomb', make it like a belt and let the man wear it on his right thigh and the woman likewise and they shall be untied.

Another

When husband and wife cannot come together write these holy words:

> Christ was born, Christ was circumcised, Christ was baptized in the river Jordan and crushed the dragon's heads, Christ was crucified, Christ was buried, Christ rose from the dead and released Adam and Eve from their bonds, thus Lord Jesus Christ our God, Son and Word of the living God crush and break the fetters and every bond from the servant of God (name of man) σ μ κ λ σ μ μ τα ϕ β θ, amen.

Write these characters on three pieces of paper with the above words and the one piece you should put on a new plate, dilute it with water for the couple to drink both of them and the second the husband should tie to his right thigh and the third they should place under their pillow and with Christ's help they will be released.

Another

You who descended into Hades and broke the fetters of death, who also reversed Hades' condemnation (i.e. sentence of death), release your servant (name) and your female servant (name). This you must write on two apples, one for the man and the other for the woman, and they should eat them on a Sunday evening, when they want to go to sleep. And you should write it on the same Sunday. On the same day, too, whoever writes this should be clean from female and all other things and he should wear a new shirt unworn or washed clean and to be given to him by the couple. And take musk and yolk and rose-water, put them in a new plate where nothing has been placed and mix them well. Take another plate, a new one, and write in it with the other plate's contents the following hymns: 'The gates of death were opened to you, Lord, and you led us out of darkness and the shadow of death and shattered our fetters,' and this breaks the bonds and 'The flame is cooled, the children sing hymns, the only Saviour is praised by the whole of Creation.' When you have written this in the unused plate, pour some water to rinse it and when you want them to go to bed, when they shall eat the apples and drink this, the husband should drink half and the wife the other half and with God's help the spells binding them will be broken.

Another

Take a new lock and put it in rainwater, lock it and unlock it seven times and utter their names, that as the lock locks and unlocks, so may so-and-so (male) and so-and-so (female) be released and it works.

If you want to teach a child to read or any craft without effort, write down on a tray the following words and give it to the priest to officiate for seven days and then to melt the letters with Epiphany holy water and then give it to the child on three mornings without food: Chariot of Christ, freedom, Christ and I beg the Holy Spirit, spirit of wisdom and spirit of rhetoric and reading, spirit of

Jesus Christ the Son of God, you can, illuminate the servant of God (name) the holy to the holy, Spirit, may the Holy Spirit come to him and may the strength of the Almighty be with you.

Amulet against all evil

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, amen. Recite the whole Creed. Secondly, 'Christ the King'. Thirdly, 'Christ has risen and the Devil was destroyed, let all the opposing forces be crushed under the sign of the Cross.'

Let the prayer of the holy martyr Cyprian be of use against all illness or against a female demon or the evil and wicked hour, against a nocturnal, midday or infernal demon, aerial and against every ghost, so that they might depart from the mind and thought of the servant of God (name) and the Gospel according to St Matthew. At that time Jesus invited his twelve disciples, etc. You received freely, you should give freely to the servant of God (name). Before me, holy angel Sabaoth Michael on my right, on my left Gabriel and Raphael upon my head, Urael and Misael to my rescue, Cherubim and Seraphim the power of the Almighty Lord, tie up and bridle my enemies who put a spell on me the servant of the Lord (name) ... make me a shepherd and them sheep and let them be before me blind, dumb, lame, blind and mad and hunchbacks and incapable of speech, and let guns and pistols, knives, stones and wood flee from me, all are bound and harnessed by our lord Jesus Christ and our Lady the Mother of God and St Constantine and his mother St Helen, so that they may shelter and preserve the servant of the Lord (name), amen. ς ς ς Χε δ π θ ο π ς θα ι τ η ο β η π τ.

He should carry on him another amulet against demons and write on it on a Saturday: 'Ματθαίου φείσον Ιωάννη έφραζον δ σ μ μ ψ η. Λουκά γινα μάρκου τίγρις η β β β β'.

Lamia Manuscript

For bound humans

Write on a deer-skin strap 'Having risen from the grave' in full and wrap it around his body, the letters on the side of his body and write:

> Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be filled with joy and everything on it. For the ruler of all, having descended into Hades in three days, has risen and broken the fetters of those bound and has risen against death through his victory and has granted us the resurrection.
>
> Having risen from the grave and having broken the bonds of Hades, you released everyone ... you appeared before your disciples and sent them forth to preach and in your great mercy ... you offered peace to the universe.

Take a needle and read over his belt and bring the nose of one and read over the anus of the other and wrap it around him. Take a new pot and a knife with a black handle and a silver ring and go fetch water in silence in a jug under a waning moon and pour the water into the pot and say thus: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Take the belt and make the sign of the cross over the water. Say thus: St Barbara is coming from nine mountains and nine plains with the servant of God (name). Untie his head and marrow, untie his cross, untie his knees, untie his joints. Let us stand aright, let us stand in fear. Say this thrice and he will be healthy.

If you want to know whether a man will live or die

Take a white candle and write on it with the wick the following ciphers:

> Then light it and when the burning fire comes close to the letters and if the candle does not go out itself but the letters get burnt, know that the man shall live, but if it goes out then he will die. Then go say to him: Κάφυ ὁροχ πάρχον. And if the patient looks at you he will live, but if he fares poorly, he will die.

Another to know whether a sick man is getting well or dying

Take a drinking glass and write the following names saying: *Rau faithful Noistei Auai Manae Paraclete*. And write these three times. And whoever brings the news do not let him move from where he stands. And make him drink three times and you shall learn the truth, whether the sick man will live or die.

[On finding treasure]

A mole is a blind animal crawling beneath the earth. From it comes the so-called mole-stone which, being alive, is useful for finding a treasure. Take the stone at the conjunction of Venus [sc. and the earth] and at its waxing inscribe on this [sc. mole-stone] a naked man holding a two-pronged fork, stooped and hoeing, and all around [sc. write] the following.

On the back [sc. write] the name *Aram* and, enclosing it in pure gold, wear it on your small right finger and you will come to where the treasure is.

Manuscript from the Monastery of Prousos in Eurytania

The charmer, that is, the magician and the seer and the candle-maker and the worker in lead and the astronomer and he who ties animals so that they may not be devoured by the wolf or couples so that they might not mingle, and he who casts spells against giddiness, may he not receive communion for ten years according to canon 65 of St Basil and canon 72 of the same saint.

If a priest should commit one of these acts, that is uses such an evil craft, he is defrocked and expelled from the church, that is from holy communion according to canon 36 of the Synod of Laodicea. And if you wish, look up in Matthew[6] chap.1 who are charmers and users of spells under the letter M. So charmers are those who attract demons by divination to do their bidding and bind wild beasts and reptiles so as to stop a creature wreaking havoc if perchance it lives somewhere outside. Similarly look in Zonaras[7] and search in canon 36 of the Synod of Laodicea and you shall find the relevant passages.

If some go to seers to get predictions or turn to the stars or bind the wolves, so that they won't devour their animals or couples in order not to come together or to learn something they do not know, so that the seer may pour wax or lead, these individuals may not receive communion for five years according to canon 60 of Tourle[8] and canon 83 of St Basil. And if a priest be such let him be defrocked.

Those who go to gypsy women for predictions and those who bring a seer to their homes to rid them of bewitchment, if they are ill or anything else, they may not receive communion for five years according to canon 24 of the Synod of Ankara.

Similarly for those who get predictions by using barley or chickpeas, five years according to chapter 1 under the letter M in Matthew.

Similarly those who carry amulets from herbs or suchlike or apply tinctures to their children or animals to ward off magic, they may not receive communion for five years according to canon 60 of Tourle.

Whoever invites magicians to perform witchcraft in order to harm another man, is censured like those [sc. magicians], that is, for twenty years as one who has committed murder deliberately, according to canon 63 of St Basil and 72 of the same…

Notes

1 Thus in the MS., with no mention of what it is.
2 *Ikteros,* in the MS. *nyktoras*.
3 Reading uncertain in MS.
4 Thus in the MS. He is obviously not a saint, but a demon.
5 Etheral oil produced from the plant *melissa officinalis*. See Landos 1991: 260, for the same recipe.
6 Matthaios Vlastaris, author of a fourteenth-century legal-canon collection *Constitution by Letter* of the fourteenth century.
7 Eminent legal expert of the twelfth century who commented on the holy canons.
8 Of the Synod of Troullos.

Part III

MAGIC IN MODERN GREECE

14

INTRODUCTION

Magic in modern Greece

J.C.B. Petropoulos

How do we define magic in relation to post-Byzantine Greek society? When does religion end and magic begin? Or is even this distinction erroneous? These are some of the questions which Charles Stewart takes up in Chapter 15, in his brief survey of the Orthodox Church's approach to the evil eye from the time of the Cappadocian Fathers to the present. In at least one instance, that of the official prayer against evil eye bewitchment which was introduced by the seventeenth century, it is obvious that a body of beliefs and practices which the Church initially denounced and outlawed as 'superstitious' and 'diabolical' can in time be validated by this very agency. What is just as striking is that the converse may occur: a once-valid set of Church beliefs and practices may subsequently be redefined by the Church as 'magic'.

It is scarcely surprising that this section features three chapters (and part of a fourth) that deal with the evil eye from different angles, for the *ophthalmos ponêros* (to use ecclesiastical parlance) is demonstrably one of the most ancient – and therefore most durable – and widespread aspects of magic in the Greek-speaking world. Whatever its derivation (ancient Mesopotamia?), this belief is clearly a 'pagan way of looking at the world',[1] and its continuance in modern Greek society attests how slowly well-entrenched cultural habits change over time.[2]

In Chapter 16 Christina Veikou views bewitchment by the evil eye and its antidote as a unified system of complementary relations created by affliction and treatment respectively. Noting that 'vision is the most social, the most polysemous and the most penetrating of senses', this social anthropologist refers to her fieldwork at Eleftherna, a mountain village near Rethymno, Crete, in analysing the causes as well as the social and emotional dynamics of the evil eye. For villagers the spell against the evil eye is not an act of magic, but on the contrary 'an action pleasing to God, a popular rite'. The human eye itself, in keeping with the local euphemism, is 'good' by nature – yet also liable to turn demonic depending on the particular emotions its bearer may experience even by chance. To be sure, bewitchment by the evil eye entails its reversal, and at Eleftherna carrying out the spell against it is a man's job *par excellence*. The incantations recited at this public performance are actually typical spells, superb specimens

of 'magical speech', as Veikou shows. She quotes three unpublished spells from this village, which she discusses in detail. In her third text the Apostles – definitionally transitional figures linking the divine and secular spheres – admire the Virgin Mary's beauty and clothes and thereby cast the evil eye on her, prompting Christ's intervention. 'Unorthodox' narrative and ritual details of this kind (for instance, the performer is required to lick the victim's forehead) bring us back to Stewart's central question: where exactly does religion end and popular magical tradition begin in modern Greece?

Vassiliki Chryssanthopoulou's chapter also examines the evil eye. Drawing on her own fieldwork, she explores in Chapter 17 the extent to which this concept and certain apotropaic and exorcistic practices associated with it still inform wedding customs among Castellorizian immigrants and their *epigoni* in Perth, Australia. As she points out, the evil eye is in reality a *social* disease, usually affecting persons in a 'marginal' or transitional stage, such as the bridal couple, or women after childbirth; through the various spells against the evil eye these individuals are reintegrated into society. The incidence of the evil eye is not only an index of the Cazzies' (as they are called) competitiveness towards one another, but also a crucial component of this group's ethnic identity, as Chryssanthopoulou shows. (In much the same way, one might add, the persistence and development of voodoo practices helped to forge a communal bond among the slaves uprooted from west Africa and their descendants in Haiti from the seventeenth century on.)[3]

Among other ingredients, magic in modern Greek society involves the use of herbs. In Chapter 18 Nikos Xenios touches upon this and moves on to the related topic of the magical deployment, which often verges on fetishism, of certain articles of clothing in modern Greek folk-tales about female demons, or *Neraïdes*. (Xenios may cause many readers to look at contemporary clothing advertisements as the end-product of shamanistic magic.)

Magic in *any* agrarian society, ancient or modern, will invest considerably in the ensuring – or withholding – of the fecundity of crops, animals and human beings. Modern Greek magic is no exception in this regard, as both Chryssanthopoulou and Paradellis show. Theodore Paradellis, in particular, surveys in Chapter 19 some of the fertility symbols featured in Greek folk-songs (and, incidentally, folk-art)[4] and discusses some of the spells intended to promote or deny sexual efficacy in general. Nowadays, as Greek society is fast becoming focused on technologically induced sexual perfectionism, it may be refreshing to read that until recently men used a 'male drop' (sperm), which they dried in the sun and served to their loved one in a magical potion in order to attract her.

Notes

1 See Dickie 1995: 9–34.
2 See above, Ch. 8.
3 See Hurbon 1995.
4 See Zora 1994, 1995: *passim*.

15

MAGIC AND ORTHODOXY

Charles Stewart

The identification of 'magic' is ultimately an arbitrary matter. Below I will illustrate this statement by studying the changing boundaries between Christianity and magic, paying special attention to the situation in Greece. In the West, 'magic' has historically taken shape as a category by contrast with socially central and highly valued activities such as religion and science. Small-scale, non-literate societies that do not have developed, circumscribed institutions of religion or science probably do not have a category corresponding to 'magic' either. It is usually those people most involved in the activities of religion or science – theologians, clerics, scientists and philosophers – who decide what magic is. Magic helps to define religion and science by exemplifying what they are *not*. Magic is 'bad science' or sub-standard religion – a body of superstition and error.

The Victorian anthropologists E.B. Tylor and Sir James Frazer held that magic typified a 'primitive' approach to the world. They thought that, in the course of human evolution, magic would inevitably be transformed into religion and then finally into science. In 'civilized' societies – such as the Great Britain where these writers lived – science should ultimately supplant magic altogether. Any magical practices still existing in such societies were considered unfortunate, but harmless, 'survivals' from earlier stages of evolution. By identifying these atavistic survivals, anthropologists could help to wipe them out and this was one of anthropology's contributions to human progress.

The recognition of magic seems straightforward today because our conceptions of religion and science are so clear and well disseminated. Yet the practices defined as magical have varied historically in relation to changes and developments in mainstream religion and normal science. This has not been a straightforward and consistent process, but a relationship marked by numerous reversals. Yesterday's Orthodox Christian practice has, in some cases, become today's magical practice just as alchemy was once an acceptable form of science but is now considered a magical pursuit.

In his *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, first published in 1912, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim systematically contrasted magic with religion. Magic, he contended, was individualistic, designed to achieve ends that did not benefit the whole society. 'There is no church of magic,' Durkheim

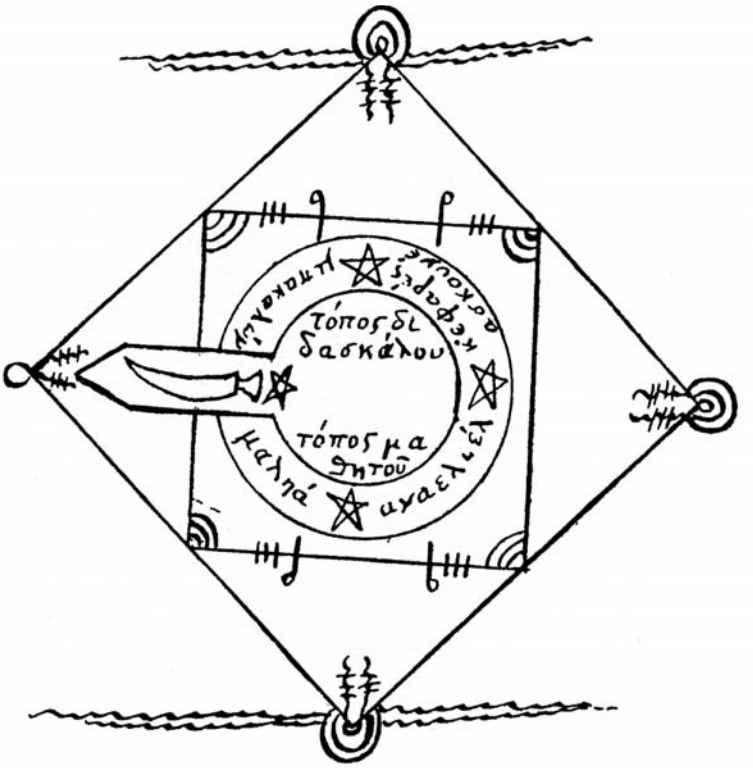

Figure 8 Magic circle used for predicting the future. Cod. 115, ? early eighteenth century, Historical and Ethnographic Society of Athens.

declared. Magic could not be practised as a central rite appealing to the broad society. By definition, it was marginal and anti-social. The possibility of 'white magic', such as that practised today by followers of Wicca in central London and other parts of Europe and North America,[1] was left out of consideration. For Durkheim magic was necessarily black.

I think that the theorizations of magic by supposedly disinterested, atheistic social scientists were actually conditioned by the long-standing views of the main Christian churches. The early Church Fathers, such as John Chrysostom, assimilated much of pre-Christian religious practice to 'superstition' and then sought to eradicate it. The belief in multiple minor gods and spirits of nature; the approach to such deities through sacrifice, divination or astrology; and the conviction that such practices effected immediate changes in nature, or helped one to gain privileged knowledge of future events – these were all signs that people were engaged in magic, or superstition (*δεισιδαιμονία*: 'the fear/worship of demons'). The basic dividing point was the acceptance of monotheism. If people converted to the idea that there was only one all-potent God, then in theory the logic and appeal of magic disappeared completely. People would

quickly understand that prayer and resort to authorized Church rituals and clerics were the best means to enlist divine assistance. The will of God was the supreme powerful force in the cosmos and Christianity offered the only valid and effective means of approach to God. The idea that nature could be directly influenced or controlled via spells was anathematized.

Yet, even when Church councils did make clear pronouncements on such matters, there was the problem of transmitting this information to remote parishes in a form that semi-educated local priests and largely illiterate local parishioners could understand. At the local level there remained difficulties in distinguishing sorcery from proper Christian practice. In Chapter 12 of this book, Calofonos has presented a study of the tenth-century *Life of St Andrew the Fool* (*Salos*) that illustrates this very situation. A devout woman resorts to a highly respected local Christian figure named Vigrinos in order to resolve her marital problems. Only after following his advice does she realize that she has been misled into anti-Christian magical practice. An acolyte of St Andrew then helps extricate her from the grips of Vigrinos' sorcery. As Calofonos points out, this story could be read as the attempt to sensitize the population to the recent legislation outlawing every sort of magic, by translating the message into the popular story format of a saint's life. The story shows how difficult it sometimes was for people to distinguish magic from religion.

Western medieval Christendom encountered the same problem. The Russian medievalist Aron Gurevich has asserted that the only way to distinguish *miracula* from *maleficia* was by observing who was performing the act.[2] Any ritual performed by an authorized cleric was *de facto* a Christian practice. But the 'Mad Saints' (*Ἅγιοι Σαλοί*) of the Eastern Church, such as St Simeon or St Andrew considered above, render even this pragmatic differentiation of magic and religion problematic. Wearing rags or no clothes at all, performing all manner of ridiculous or astonishing ascetic practice, the mad saints were surely marginal to the mainstream Church. It would have been difficult for the average person to tell whether they were valid Christian holy men or just social misfits.[3] This difficulty of deciding the identity of practitioners was one of the points that the story of Vigrinos was meant to dramatize.

Even if we could devise objective criteria for distinguishing religion from magic we confront another problem. Rituals approved by the Church at one point in time can later be rejected and even demonized. The anthropologist and historian William Christian furnishes a good example of this from Catholic Spain. The local priest in the village where he conducted field research told him that people should pray only *for* the souls of the dead in purgatory. That is, their prayers should be addressed only to God on behalf of the dead, so that the souls of the deceased might eventually be admitted to Paradise. It was considered theologically unacceptable for people to pray *to* souls in purgatory, as if the souls themselves possessed independent power to help people. In the course of historical research, however, Christian came across a manual for priests dating to the nineteenth century in which the practice of praying to souls in purgatory was

validated.[4] People who today prayed to the souls in purgatory might actually have been following the earlier instructions of the Catholic Church, unaware that they had been superseded.

If the foregoing example demonstrates how the Church doctrine of one period can become the superstition of a later one, then the treatment of the evil eye in Greece illustrates the converse. The belief that people can exert evil power over others by means of their eyes alone is as old as the myth of Perseus and the Gorgon in Greece. Historical evidence indicates that the belief in the evil eye was firmly rooted in all of the societies of the eastern Mediterranean by the end of antiquity. The Fathers of the Early Church disapproved of this popular belief and considered it an element of pagan superstition that proper Christians should leave behind. St John Chrysostom censured women who besmirched the faces of their children with mud, an action meant to make them less enviable and therefore less susceptible to the evil eye. He considered that through this 'ugliness' (*askhimosyni*) these women fell into 'the snares of the devil' (*diavolikas pagidas*).[5] St Basil, in his Homily on Envy, rejected the idea that envious eyes alone can cause damage. In his view this was just an old wives' tale.[6]

That these sorts of dismissals of the evil eye needed to be repeated in ecclesiastical pronouncements throughout the Middle Ages indicates that evil eye beliefs and practices had not died out among the laity. Apparently realizing that it could not abolish folk beliefs in the evil eye, the Orthodox Church incorporated a special prayer against evil eye bewitchment. It slipped into the Small Prayerbook (*Mikron Evkhologion*) sometime after the seventeenth century. This official prayer evidently draws on traditional spells against the evil eye (*xematiasmata*) in its formulation.[7] The Church thus legitimated what it had earlier criticized as superstition; *yesterday's sorcery became validated as part of today's religion.*

In the course of anthropological research on the island of Naxos, I uncovered similar areas of uncertainty and reversal between the domains of 'superstition' and acceptable Orthodox religion. As in many other parts of Greece, various 'spells' (*giteies*, *xorkia*) treating illnesses such as erysipelas (*anemopyroma*), sunstroke (*iliasis*) and jaundice (*ikteros*) circulated until recently. Some of them may still be practised today. Like the rituals performed to remove the evil eye, these spells were addressed to the saints, Christ and God in order to remove the illness. It may not always have been evident to people that these 'spells' were not valid Orthodox prayers. The villagers referred to them as 'prayers' (*prosevkhes*); only outside analysts such as Orthodox clerics and folklorists classified them as spells. The situation was further complicated by the fact that priests had often grown up in the very parish where they then officiated and had not received a high level of theological training.[8] The village priest was thus prone to making the same errors of judgment as the laity.

This clearly happened in one case in the late nineteenth century when the parish priest of Apeiranthos, Primikirios, was brought before the Metropolitan of Paros and Naxos and reprimanded for reading the *kharti tis yalous* (*χαρτί της γιαλούς*), an exorcism against the child-stealing Gello. The text of this exorcistic

spell was published by the folklorist D.B. Oikonomidis, who noted that he had found versions of the text in the possession of the village schoolteacher and a local archimandrite in the 1930s.[9] This may suggest that even these eminent members of local society did not view the *kharti* as falling outside the sphere of acceptable Orthodox religious practice.

I would now like to turn to a broader question – the possibility that Orthodoxy and magic in Greece have developed from common roots in the ferment of religious ideas in the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods. This has arguably given rise to certain resemblances between the two at the level of form and intention. This may further account for the difficulty ordinary people sometimes have in distinguishing magic from religion in Greece.

Consider, for example, the ritual for 'unbewitching' someone affected by the evil eye (*xematiasma*). There are many ways of doing this in Greece. Some involve burning cloves or charcoal and dropping these into water, or dropping a cross into water. One of the most common forms of the *xematiasma* ritual is to drip oil into a bowl of water while uttering a prayer. Sometimes the prayer is said as each drop of oil is dripped into the water, or it may be recited after all the oil has been added to the water. It is thought that by looking at the reaction of the oil and the water, the un-bewitcher can tell whether the sufferer really has been given the evil eye. If the water separates from the oil, then the person was not bewitched, but if the water and oil mix, then the person has indeed been a victim of the evil eye. In either case the ritual proceeds to the same conclusion: the patient is sprinkled with the oil and water mixture. I call the words spoken 'prayers' because, although they are not officially sanctioned by the Church, they are generally straightforward appeals to Christ or the saints. Occasionally they include obscene or violent threats against the person who has cast the evil eye as in the following spell from Naxos:

> Αν είν' από γυναίκα να πρηστούν τα βυζιά της.
> Αν είν' από άντρα να πρηστούν τ' αρχίδια του.
> Καράβια ανεβαίνουνε, καράβια κατεβαίνουνε.
>
> If [the evil eye comes] from a woman, may her teats swell.
> If [the evil eye comes] from a man, may his balls swell.
> Ships go up, ships go down.

But this was more the exception than the rule. For the most part, the prayers and the actions in un-bewitching ceremonies are consistent with the orientation of Orthodoxy, as shown by the fact, for example, that the official Orthodox un-bewitching rite also calls for a sprinkling with Holy Water (*agiasmos*).

On Naxos a person who feels bewitched by the evil eye may silently enumerate the nine bodily apertures while silently praying.[10] This practice reminds us immediately of the ritual of baptism where the sense organs of the initiate are anointed and sealed with oil and then with myrrh. This symbolizes the 'sealing'

of the human body with the grace of the Holy Spirit so that it will be inviolable to demonic incursions. At the moment when one suspects the evil eye may be taking hold, the re-enumeration of the apertures while praying reasserts the effectiveness of baptism by replicating part of the baptismal ritual.

It can be argued that the evil eye ritual and the Orthodox baptism ceremony are homologous. The two involve similar ritual form and intention. Water is blessed with the addition of oil in both rituals and the participant is then brought into contact with the water. There is a difference between the full immersion of baptism and the sprinkling of the *xematiasma* ceremony. In both rituals, however, the water is used to purify the person from demonic possession. Since there is a risk that the water which will be used to purify the individual may contain demonic spirits, the water itself is purified in both rituals. At the very least the evil eye ritual can be viewed as a folk form of *agiasmos*, but I would also consider the *agiasmos* ritual as a miniature baptism; a reminiscence and restoration of the purified state of baptism.

How can we explain these similarities between central Orthodox rituals and magical rites? I suspect that many people would argue that the Orthodox ritual of baptism must have come first. The evil eye ceremony and the *agiasmos* ceremonies would be later, partial imitations and references to it, much as village children devise their own imitation *epitaphios* processions for weeks and months after Easter. I would contend that *neither* ritual came first. I think they both developed independently in late antiquity from common Hellenic ideas about the power of demons, the effectiveness of exorcism, the sanctifying power of oil and the purificatory effect of water. The two rituals, baptism and *xematiasma*, were thus cut from the same cultural cloth, as it were. But they then followed different trajectories in Hellenic culture over the succeeding two millennia.

The core of the Orthodox baptismal ceremony was formulated in the second century CE and the ritual was further developed by theologians and clerics who gradually formalized a textual script for the ceremony. Meanwhile, the evil eye ceremony followed a different course. Although drawing on the same pool of ideas as the baptismal ceremony, the *xematiasma* ritual, as well as other spells to cure illness, were proscribed by the Church. They were transmitted orally, subject to constraints such as that the spells be passed on between sexes in succeeding generations: from mother to son and then from father to daughter and so on. This oral transmission gave the spells a different rate of change from the textually recorded, doctrinally protected rite of baptism.

One of the curious features of the *xematiasma* ceremony is its divinatory component. By looking at the mixture of oil and water it is thought that one can tell whether or not the patient has indeed been bewitched, yet even if it is determined that the person is *not* bewitched, the ritual is not halted but rather carried through to completion. The practice of divining by looking into a bowl of water, with or without the addition of oil, was called *lekanomanteia*[11] and it was a known practice in antiquity; it continued throughout the Byzantine period. The *xematiasma* ritual seems to have preserved some formal elements of

lekanomanteia, but the meaning of the divinatory component seems to have atrophied because it does not affect the teleology of the ritual. The baptismal ceremony may also have drawn on the principles of *lekanomanteia*, but as divination was a practice classified as pagan and superstitious in the Early Church, it is no wonder that this once meaningful dimension of the ritual has been totally removed.

To a very large degree Christianity developed in relation to Hellenic culture of the first centuries of our era. Christianity was initially a Semitic idea which then travelled beyond Palestine and won many of its first converts in Greek-speaking communities in what is now Greece. Christianity developed as a systematic religion through this process. Much of the New Testament was written in Greek; this was the language and culture into which the *kerygma* was translated and adapted. Present-day Greece thus presents a highly unusual situation. It constitutes an example of what the anthropologist McKim Marriott has called an 'indigenous great tradition'. This means that the Greek form of Christianity (with all this implies about Greek culture in the broader sense) is the result of local elaboration rather than outside colonial or imperial imposition.[12] In other words, there is a genetic relationship between Orthodoxy and local village culture in Greece that is not the case in many other parts of the world such as South America or Africa, where European Christianity was imposed on fundamentally non-European peoples and in social and climatic conditions very different from those in the eastern Mediterranean.

One of the results of this situation is that local religious practices considered 'superstitious' by the Church are actually formally quite similar to its own central rites. Centuries of interaction and accommodation between the two traditions, such as those considered above, have increased the complexity of the situation. Foreign, imported forms of magic may be easy for all Greeks to recognize, but the dividing line between folk-magic and Orthodox practice is often more difficult to decide. Ultimately the matter comes down, not to *who* is performing the ritual, but to what the Church declares. Such declarations can take time to be pronounced, and may later be reversed. This is the nature of the arbitrariness and uncertainty that beset the attempt to distinguish between magic and religion in Greece.

Notes

1 Luhrmann 1989.
2 Gurevich 1988: 74.
3 I thank Giorgos Calofonos for this observation.
4 Christian 1989: 94.
5 Veikou 1998: 61. On *atopa* and *geloia* as means of warding off the evil eye, see Engeman 1975: 30.
6 Greenfield 1988: 112.
7 Stewart 1991: 235.

8 In 1920 only 1 per cent of all Orthodox clergy (excluding bishops) had received university education. By 1975 this had risen to only 8 per cent. See Ware 1983: 217.
9 Oikonomidis 1940: 65ff.
10 For a discussion of similar data from Crete see Herzfeld 1986: 107–20.
11 For this and other related practices, see Delatte 1932.
12 Marriott 1955.

16

RITUAL WORD AND SYMBOLIC MOVEMENT IN SPELLS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE[1]

Christina Veikou

Words are not enough. Acts are needed for the words to take hold.

The belief in the evil eye, in the harmful power which the insistent and penetrating gaze has on admirable persons and objects, is a cultural idiom widespread among people in the Mediterranean, who cite it in order to comprehend and subsequently cope with the consequences of unexpected and inexplicable misfortune. Particularly in Greek culture, the evil eye is considered as the most probable cause of a sudden and unjustifiable, personal and mainly physical, disturbance. Such a cultural interpretation signifies a moral/evaluative system binding the individual to society.[2] This system serves to interpret the interaction of personal perceptions and social relations.[3]

Within the framework of everyday life, persons, values and ways of behaving are exposed to the gaze of others; therefore they must appear to be compatible with and analogous to the accepted principles of communal life. Thus, whenever these principles are violated by superiority (whether conscious or not) in appearance or the material goods someone exhibits, the ideal sociability of collective life is undermined and the resulting structural disorder brings about the danger of the evil eye, that is the visual attack on the transgressor. The evil eye attacks the body, the property, the personal and social being of the afflicted. Recovery requires the spell against the evil eye, that is, the ritual reintegration of the afflicted person in society.

The sentimental logic of *xematiasma*[4]

The evil eye reveals a momentary crisis in the relation between the bodily security of a person and the stability of social life. This crisis is considered to be extraordinary, because it is unexpected according to the local cultural logic; so it is attributed to supernatural and irrational causes, to the 'evil eye', the 'evil

Figure 9 Ancient Greek eye-shaped *kylikes*, sixth century BCE. The eyes on these drinking vessels protected symposiasts.

gaze', the 'evil encounter', the 'dangerous hour', to a vague feeling of transcendent evil which is diffused and ever present among people, a constant threat not only to personal being but also to social cohesion. Local society emphatically declares that 'You cannot avoid the (evil) eye, no matter where you go, whatever you do, wherever you may be, at home, at work, in the street, in the coffee-shop, the evil eye will find you.'

The vehicle of this fearful power is the eye, the organ of vision and visual communication. Vision is the most social, the most comprehensive and the most penetrating sense. Its organ, the eye, is a symbol of knowledge and power across many cultures. The eye knows because it sees, and for this reason it has a possessive power over the objects it views. It transmits experiences and emotions, it is the intermediary between man and the world, it captures and it recalls the truth of past and future events: 'One look is a thousand years,' as an elderly Cretan sums it up, using his retrospective imagination to describe the dominant power of the eye and of vision in social events.

Although people recognize the potency of the eye and agree that one must guard against the evil eye, nevertheless, when they attempt to account for the attack of the evil eye, they approach it as something natural, as an innate attribute someone possesses without deliberately aspiring to harm others. Public rhetoric in this area of Crete insists that 'the eye is not evil, though it may have harmful effects. It is given by nature for some people to inflict harm or be harmed by the evil eye. And s/he who has this power is unaware of it. S/he does not do it out of spite, s/he does not mean to do it, it just happens. It is something like a current, a force, a wind blowing, but it pulls like a magnet.'

In this way, local discourse clears the evil eye of any wilful, damaging and malevolent magical influence. It does not include the casting of the evil eye in the category of intentional, deliberate magic,[5] because it is 'of little harm'. It presents the evil eye as a natural attitude whose effect is uncontrollable but recognizable and acceptable, since it is known to all and may occur at any time. Its randomness and the indeterminacy as to when and where the casting of the evil eye may occur are precisely the features that differentiate it from 'sorcery'. Magic, in the common view, is a specific and personified action which is carried out in secret, at a precise time and place, by persons who have special abilities and knowledge. It is governed by a variety of restrictive and initiatory rites and directed against specific persons, aiming to inflict permanent harm, destruction and devastation.[6] The annulling of magic, 'the undoing of sorcery', requires one to turn to special persons versed in the proper secret rites, whereas the

healing of the evil eye is straightforward, open and easy, since 'everyone knows how to cure the evil eye'. The major reason, however, that most people invoke to describe the difference between affliction by the evil eye and magic, is that the cure for the evil eye is 'accepted by the Church', which in their opinion is a guarantee that not only is it not an evil deed, but on the contrary it is an action pleasing to God, a popular sacred rite. 'This spell we use here to remove the evil eye', stressed a Cretan healer, 'is said to be like magic. But it is not evil, because the Church too believes in the evil eye since it has a text on it, a *thiarmophyllada*.'[7] A woman from the same village, also a healer, told me that when she started healing the evil eye, she first confessed it to the village priest, and not only did he not discourage her, but he advised her to go ahead and do it 'for the sake of her soul and her departed loved ones, because it was a good thing'.

The meaning of evil which emerges from the system of casting and healing the evil eye (*xe/matiasma*) in the moral ideology of highland Crete does not imply the notion of intentional sinful malice, as presented in Christian theodicy. It is rather a practical perception of protection against random dangers which threaten people's valuable goods – their health and property – and which cannot be attributed to any other cause. The evil eye is a possible but manageable danger, a socialized evil.

At the Cretan village of Eleftherna, the evil eye appears to be free of the occult and unexpressed influence of a demonic 'evil'. Here it has a decidedly secularized presence, devoid of any metaphysical or mystical tendency. It is something natural, part of the order of human things and an element of the way people are reconciled to life: 'the one who casts the evil eye does so involuntarily, it just happens. S/he intends no harm, but it is his/her eye that strikes the other. While evil is a different thing. The evil, the sneaky person wants to destroy you, so that you lose what you have, he does not intend only to cast the evil eye.' This clear certainty about the disinterested character of the evil eye is strengthened even more by arguments of practical morality governing collective life: 'The evil eye is not pathetic (meaning it does not cause *pathimata*, "sufferings and passions"), it is not enmity. No one is so evil as to know that he casts the evil eye and wish to use his power to an evil end. If the evil eye were caused by enmity then we would have devoured each other. We here have no enmity within us. We haven't hurt anyone. We say all we know. We are good.'

As proof of this asserted common goodness, the healing of the evil eye is carried out easily, willingly, publicly, mainly by men. It is a technique and a performance with a dose of theatricality, nothing supernatural or awe-inspiring, a distinct but natural power, totally in tune with the ethos of the locality. It is a functional part of a tradition which is displayed as a cultural asset, as a local peculiarity exhibited in exchange for the symbolic offer of a drink of *tsikoudia*.

Nonetheless, this emphatically declared climate of consensus raises some questions – could this overtly positive public rhetoric in reality conceal a reverse evaluation? Could it be, that is, that people present the evil eye as natural, reasonable and benevolent, precisely in order to placate evil and reconcile them-

selves to unpleasant situations, which they are unable either to explain or to overcome? Could this all be, finally, a verbal euphemism? Public discourse is socially constructed; it is rhetoric which instead of revealing, more often conceals the truth of things. This ambiguity is concealed under the private statement of an 80-year-old Cretan woman healer, who, when I asked her whether the eye was good or evil, answered: 'What is good and what is evil, my child, man does not know.'

Further, the naturalistic explanation of the belief in the evil eye, instead of clarifying the terms and conditions that produce it, stresses even more the ambivalent and vague character of the relationships involved in the phenomenon. For the 'natural' explanation reveals a logical contradiction: how can the judgment concerning a natural phenomenon (the function of the eye), which is an empirical and not an evaluative judgment, immediately turn into a moral one (the evil eye), and consequently be evaluative and intentional at the same time?

The catalyst which, according to the local arguments, transforms the empirical impression into a moral category is emotion. 'Man's eye is natural, it is not evil. Everyone *thiarmizei* ("casts an evil eye") and everyone *thiarmizetai* ("falls under its spell"). An evil result occurs when sentiment comes into it, admiration and *apokamaroma* ("extreme admiration and gloating over something or someone"). When you keep it in mind and remember it, then you do not cast the evil eye. When you admire from the heart, lust for and gloat over something or someone, it is then that you cast the evil eye.' The same reasoning is discernible in another version: 'The eye is spontaneous, it is an air one possesses, it comes out of his/her heart. Anyone who realizes at the moment that s/he is looking and may cause harm, then his/her stare does not work, because it comes out of his/her mind and not out of his/her heart.' As long as people's senses and thoughts are controlled by rational judgment, no fissure arises in interpersonal relations and no danger threatens collective life. When, however, people allow themselves to be overtaken by intense emotions, rationality and right-mindedness are cast aside and their behaviour becomes malevolent, full of passion (*pathos*) and causes *pathimata* ('sufferings'). The logic of *xe/matiasma* is the logic of the heart and body, not of reason and the mind: 'It is because of his/her love and his/her craving that one casts the evil eye.' This epigrammatic popular formulation reflects precisely the intensity of social interaction and the oppositional nature of personal feelings. The love of and desire for the other, the most positive emotion, includes its negation, since it entails the threat of destruction when not tempered by reason. Thus the logic of emotion dictates a practical morality,[8] a peculiar categorical command. For people's relations to be in harmony, senses and feelings must always be controlled by reason.[9]

Spells and 'healing' practices: the word as act, the body as locus

The bodily symptoms of affliction by the evil eye denote the personal or social conflicts of the sufferer, and the 'illness' caused becomes a symbolic bridge

joining the human with the social body. For this very reason, the cure takes place on a symbolic level, the 'healing is no doctor's job'. It requires skill and technique, 'it needs words and acts'. The healer restores order and reinstates the 'patient' to his prior security by creating a participatory performative atmosphere of physical contact and emotional reaffirmation and by introducing into the field of action not only social individuals, but also extra-social entities (Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, *thiarmos* ('the evil eye')), which rule good and evil and establish an entire system of cosmic order.

The spells recited for lifting the evil eye are prayer-like incantations in the literal sense of the therapeutic 'enchantment' they evoke. They are speech-acts, they act while speaking and describe while acting. This is 'magical' speech, which contains all the elements characteristic of a ritual; a rhythmic, representational and repeatedly recited speech,[10] with an arbitrary lexical, syntactical and semantic structure, where the comprehensible and the incomprehensible co-exist. It is also an emotional discourse, with many ambiguous meanings. It is not a clear utterance but rather an implicit signification – the words do not denote persons and things, they are the persons and things.

The three examples that follow are charms for curing the evil eye, which are used in the village of Eleftherna; these spells are special only for humans afflicted by the evil eye, for it is sacrilegious for the healer to use the same charm for both humans and animals. I have selected these three spells from among other variations with the same apotropaic content, because they present a clear gradation in the effect of the evil eye. The first charm describes the disruptive attack of *thiarmos* on all forms of social life, the second depicts the affliction but also the ritual protection of the human body, and the third narrates the influence of the evil eye even in the transcendent realm.

1 In the name of Christ, God and all the Saints.
The *thiarmos* set off, the anguish, the evil gaze to go
to the earth,
to exterminate the sheep, to bring old men into dotage,
to drive old women mad,
to attack the baby in the cradle.
The prophet Christ was looking at him and tells him:
Where are you going, *thiarme*, anguish, evil gaze of the earth?
I am going to exterminate the sheep,
to bring old men into dotage,
to drive old women mad,
to attack the baby in the cradle.
Yes, but come back and go away to the high mountains,
where no ox bellows, where no dog barks,
there you shall eat, there you shall drink,
there you shall reside,
and look for wild creatures to slaughter,

to eat their meat, to suck their blood,
and quit the innards of this [person], the servant [of
God]...
Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty.
[The healer counts, touching the sufferer from head to toes.]
May the Forty Saints help you and escort you.

2 On December twenty-five Christ is born,
this moment and that one are thought to be the same.
Two eyes attacked this person, three words have cured him/her.
[In the name of] the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
Saint Panteleimon, great healer of all people,
you who cure all wounds, you who console all pains,
cure this person [name] and take all the hurts out of his/her body.
Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty.
Forty Saints help him/her and lift the thiarmos out of his/her body.

The healer counts the twelve holes of the sufferer's body: two eyes, two nostrils, the mouth, two ears, two breasts, the navel, the urethra and the anus.[11] Then the healer licks the sufferer's forehead and if the latter is really under the evil eye, his/her forehead has a salty taste. Finally the healer spits on the ground three times and says, 'Earth, take his/her suffering and give him/her health'.

3 Saints Anargyroi, great healers of all people,
May he/she [name] be cured
[because] s/he has been baptized and anointed and sanctified.
The Virgin Mary had her hair washed and combed,
She put on her lovely garment and sat on her throne.
She looked withered and languid.
Christ passed by and asked her:
What is happening to you, my mother, and you look so withered and
languid?
And the Virgin Mary answered him:
I have had my hair washed and combed, I put on my lovely garment and sat
on my throne.
The Apostles passed by and admired me
and they cast an evil eye on me.
Then Master Christ told her:
Count, my mother, nine times [the healer counts]
and spit on the ground three times [the healer spits]
and you shall feel well, you shall be cured of the envious
looks, of the evil eye.

Go away, evil eye, envious looking, and leave him/her [name],
Christ orders you out, go away.

After the spell, the healer measures with his/her handkerchief. He/she holds one end of the handkerchief with a little salt in his/her palm and folds the other end under his/her elbow. Then s/he loosens the first end from his/her palm and measures what is left. Sometimes, it is said, half the length of the palm is missing, sometimes the whole.

In all three charms we can clearly distinguish the three stages of displacement in space and time, which according to Turner[12] define a ritual. The charms begin with the stage of separation in place and time, so that the situation might be symbolically detached from the process of everyday reality and be ideally located in 'another' sacred time-space, inhabited by transcendent beings, a world beyond, which is not historical and therefore not constrained by human conventions, and where accordingly anything may happen. This is clearer in the second charm ('this moment and that one are thought to be the same') – 'this moment' takes us back to 'that one', the time of Christ's birth and so both moments are sanctified. Additionally, the initial invocations of God, Christ, the Virgin and the saints are blessings that sanctify the whole event.

The second stage reveals the liminality of the situation. However, liminal time is differentiated in the three charms. In the first, the critical time of transition begins with the calamitous journey of *thiarmos* towards the human world and ends with the saving intervention of Christ: it is the classic motif of the struggle between good and evil. In the second charm marginal time is shortened through a brief formulation ('two eyes attacked this person, three words have cured him/her'). The primeval struggle of good and evil has been concluded and the removal of evil is confirmed in the ritual sphere, where the 'three words' overcome the 'two eyes', thanks to the holy forces connoted by the sacred number 'three'.

In the third charm the liminality of the occasion is even more critical, since the very being of the benevolent entity is at stake. It is the Mother of Christ who has been afflicted by the admiring look of his pupils, the Apostles. The Apostles themselves are transitional entities, men who through their devotion to Christ were sanctified, having passed, that is, from the secular to the sacred sphere. But the Virgin, too, appears here in a transitional state, since she tends to herself in a most human way (she has her hair washed and combed, she puts on her lovely garment) and thus transcends the accepted boundaries of sanctity, which entail the renunciation of the physical body. When the Virgin Mary behaves like a beautiful woman, she provokes the admiration of the male Apostles and meets with the same fate as humans – she is attacked by the evil eye. The narrative clearly implies that the origin of evil lies in the human world, but its power extends even to the spiritual one. Through the ritual, the displacement from one world to the other is not paradoxical but self-evident and unimpeded.

The final stage is that of reunion. Now speech is literally transformed into an act which is performed over the human body. The first two charms end with

counting from one to the holy number of forty: the first with the measurement of forty spans on the body of the afflicted person (first from the toes to the head and then in reverse) and the second with the enumeration of the twelve body orifices and with the licking of the patient's forehead.[13] In the third charm, the part of body in which the presence of evil is tangibly and visibly confirmed is the healer's hand, in particular the one with which s/he performed the *xematiasma*. Thus the healer 'takes onto him/herself the evil', s/he manipulates it as the one who knows and masters the situation, and s/he finally demonstrates the defeat of the evil by the shortened length of his/her handkerchief.[14] The licking of the forehead is also an extreme form of bodily empathy between the 'patient' and the healer. The performer of the spell recognizes and disperses the spell, through his tongue coming into direct physical contact with the body of the patient. Here licking is a 'physical' procedure of cleansing and cure. The body fluids, the brow's sweat and the mouth's saliva are meaningful symbols signifying the withdrawal of evil and the purification of the suffering body. Through these performances speech turns into act, acts are 'embodied', and the body becomes the chart on which all the symbolic displacements of the affliction are inscribed in the process of the therapeutic ritual.[15]

Also noteworthy are the parts of the social and human body afflicted by the evil eye, as vividly described in the charms. *Thiarmos* destroys the animal herd, makes young children sick and drives the elderly mad. It thus destroys the forces which ensure survival, reproduction and the wise administration of human society, that is, all the elements which define the physical existence and the social identity of human beings. In this way *thiarmos* can transform the organized social collectivity into a wild state. This is why the cure effected through the intervention of Christ's holy power[16] is carried out in a homeopathic manner, through the divine command to evil to return 'to the mountains', to the extra-social space of wild nature, 'where no ox bellows, where no dog barks', far from every locus of human community or even in the depths of the earth, according to the concluding wish of the second charm. The ritual oscillation between the primary structural limits of nature and culture is, I think, obvious.

Above and beyond these limits, the ritual word interposes the holy community of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Forty Saints, the Saints Anargyroi, St Panteleimon and All Saints. In this way, it expands the universe and unifies the physical, social and transcendent world, while transforming the discontinuous human present into a symbolic, everlasting world, where the problems of this world vanish. The ritual brings forth an inversion of the context: it is not the afflicted party who summons a holy power for his cure, but rather it is the sacred situation which imposes and validates this cure.[17] In other words, the cure which is sought by the third charm is not a sufferer's request but his (or her) rightful claim, because 's/he has been baptized and anointed and sanctified', that is, s/he is a child of God and a member of the sacred community of the believers.

In this ritual context, the human body comes to the fore as a locus not only in the semiotic sense, as a vehicle, that is, of messages and images, but also in a

practical sense, as part of social experience and practice. The human body is a peculiar complex of cultural inscriptions and personal attitudes. Through it people live out, recognize and express the meanings and values of their culture; through it they also express the problems they encounter in their relationships. The physical symptoms of affliction by the evil eye are a sensitive index of the conflicts which people experience; the healing process resolves these conflicts through the body, too. The reverse counting of the forty spans over the body of the afflicted person, starting from below and moving upwards and then in the opposite direction, represents the removal of evil from the patient's body and his/her return to a normal state, just as one takes off a dirty garment in order to put on a clean one.[18]

The effect of the evil eye is not, however, restricted to a person's exterior appearance. It enters his body and decays his/her inside. Noting that all the vital human organs are located within, we can appreciate that the imminent danger is death. This is why the commands for the removal of the evil eye, 'quit the innards of this [person]' and 'take all the hurts out of his/her body', have such an accurately specified referent.

A person's life and soul are to be found inside his/her body and every entry or exit 'hole' of the body is liminal, endangering his/her survival. This is the reason that the spell names every specific 'body hole' – in this way the boundaries of the body are controlled and guarded against any possible intrusion. The openings of the body are borderline orifices, entrances for evil and exits of vital breath. These orifices are cultural metonymic forms which denote the continuity of internal and external space. The substances which enter or exit from these orifices delimit the participation in, or the exclusion of the human body from, the social domain. The ritual which controls the fragile boundaries of physical being is, finally, an act of safeguarding the human social being.

The ritual healing of the evil eye restores bodily integrity and secures the life cycle of the community. It occupies an intermediate space between the spoken and the unspoken, manifest and secret, speech and silence, rational and magical, life and death. Through it the human body constitutes, materially and symbolically, the locus where collective ideas, values, intentions and sentiments are perceived, expressed and reaffirmed. This is why such a symbolic idiom, however bizarre it may seem from the viewpoint of 'pure' logic, is rendered completely self-evident and plausible through the process of collective life. It is society that always transforms particular events into indexes or symbols of another order of things.

Notes

1 The term used for the ritual healing of the evil eye affliction is *xematiasma*. It entails holy spells accompanied by symbolic acts. The ethnographic material presented in this chapter (mainly oral descriptions by native healers and three incantations against the evil eye) originated from fieldwork I undertook in 1989 at Eleftherna, a mountain village in the prefecture

of Rethymno, Crete. The emphasis on local parlance aims on the one hand to bring out the 'social poetics' of the language, that is, its constructive contribution to the interpretation of social relations, and on the other to describe the expressiveness of language used during the performance of a ritual.

2 Mauss 1990: 225, pointed out that all symbolic systems, as well as magic or religion, are not the work of individual thought but an expression of social feelings which take form through a game of value judgments, that is, expressive aphorisms which ascribe various qualities to different persons or objects entering the system.

3 See Veikou 1998: 90: 'The spell of the evil eye is one of the phenomena connecting symbolic life with practical action, social process with personality, the person with his/her body ... It is furthermore a form of visual perception and a code of communication: a strategy which people use in order to construct their personal identity as well as their social relations, by obeying or defying the common but often contradictory principles of collective life – sociability and autonomy, cooperation and competition, conformity and exhibition, mutuality and selfishness.'

4 In Greek I use the composite term *xe/matiasma* as a common form of expression to denote both the attack and the ritual healing of the evil eye. It is a system of relations, where the two processes form a unity, given that the first necessarily entails the second, and the latter in turn ritually completes the first.

5 Skouteri-Didaskalou 1997: 12, 36, includes the evil eye spell in the 'partial analytical categories' which compose the total phenomenon of magic. She classifies it, positively, under the category of 'good magic' (witchcraft), 'of an innate psychic force which its bearer is not conscious of and which acts or harms over and above the intentions of its agent'. However, indigenous discourse in Crete does not seem to agree with such a typology which connects the evil eye with magic, because, in the local context, magic is conceived as exclusively evil and intentional, whereas the evil eye 'is not by ill will'. Comparative ethnographic evidence from fieldwork in eastern Greek Macedonia and the region of Skopje (in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) also supports similar conclusions: see Veikou 1998: 297–8: 'The evil eye bears no relation to evil. Anyone casting the evil eye has this innate ability, he cannot help it... an evil person does not necessarily have the evil eye' and also Rheubottom 1985: 77–8: 'The evil eye is an innate but potential attribute. The people of Skopje say: "He has an evil eye but does not make use of it. He is a good person."'

6 The classic definition by Mauss 1990; 1903: 90 defines as magic 'every ritual which does not form part of an organized cult, which is private, secret, mystical and tends towards the forbidden'. Evans-Pritchard 1937; 1976: 201, 226–8, on the basis of his fieldwork among the Azande, differentiates between 'good magic', or witchcraft, which is a socially acceptable psychic force, and 'bad magic' (sorcery), which is illicit and immoral.

7 The *thiarmophyllada* is a generic term for the religious texts included in the prayer-books of the Christian Church and recited by the priests as blessings against spells. *Thiarmos* or *phthiarmos* is a word used in Crete for the spell of the evil eye. The etymological origin of the word is unclear. It is probably a local idiom, a lexical corruption of an earlier form. Two probable linguistic affinities may be put forward: either with the word *ptarmos* (= 'sneeze'), a phenomenon considered to denote the expectation of good news, hence a good omen (in this case *phthiarmos* is a euphemistic metonymy for the evil eye) or with the word *phtharmos* (='attrition, catastrophe'), where *phthiarmos* is the literal rendering of the consequences of the attack of the evil eye. In either case, *thiarmos* bears a close resemblance in terms of sound and sense to the word *ophthalmos* (= 'eye'), and may be interpreted as a local oral evolution of the original lexical form. Besides, in symbolic systems words are used as magical entities and not as carriers of a cognitive message.

8 Rosaldo 1983: 136 n. 4, observes that emotions entail the involvement of the physical experience with conscious judgment: 'Emotions are not passive situations, they are moral acts.'

9 The dualistic explanatory scheme, heart/thought, sentiment/mind, is strongly reminiscent of the Platonic relation of *thymic* and *logic*, the elements which compose the soul and determine human action antagonistically.

10 See Christidis 1997: 56–8. Rhythm and repetition constitute precisely what Malinowski 1935; 1965: 238, calls 'the creative metaphor of magical speech', that is, the belief of the participant that repetition of certain words will make real the situation they describe.

11 A healer, in enumerating the orifices of the body, added the gall-bladder and the heart. These organs are not orifices, but 'channels', as he called them, that is, conduits of body fluids (blood, bile), and therefore they can be passages through which evil may enter the human body.

12 Turner 1979: 235, following A. Van Gennep's typology of rites of passage, considers that every ritual is performed in three stages: separation, liminality and reintegration.

13 In Crete, this stage of the healing is also called *xemetrima* (= 'counting'), the whole procedure often being called *xemetrima*, too. The *xemetrima* makes the attack visible and tangible. On the sealing of body orifices during the healing see also above, Ch. 15 (Stewart).

14 The 'missing palm' on the healer's handkerchief is identified with evil – it was this that acted and had to vanish. Male healers who recite the third charm use their headscarf in the healing process, and this brings an additional symbolic significance to their ability to heal, since the headscarf becomes the visible symbol of their healing capacity. The most competent male and female healers, who are in great demand at Eleftherna, are called *cherikarides* [= 'with an efficient hand'] because 'their hand has a good touch' and they are well versed in the art of healing. It seems that what Lévi-Strauss 1967: 36, claims for the famous magician Quaselid applies also to the Cretan healers of the evil eye: 'Quaselid was not a great magician because he healed his patients; he healed his patients because he was a great magician.'

15 As noted by de Coppet 1992: 5, 14, the displacement in space and time is a fundamental feature of the ritual, which does not simply express abstract ideas but accomplishes things, having an impact on the real world.

16 The sacred intervention effectively begins with Christ's imperative address to the *thiarmos*: 'Where are you going, *thiarme*?' Through its naming, the destructive force is identified and controlled and its expulsion begins.

17 Lévi-Strauss 1972: 198, has pointed out that ritual therapeutic systems provide a linguistic idiom through which otherwise inexpressible mental conditions can be immediately expressed. The displacement on the linguistic level imposes order upon the actual experience and makes it comprehensible, for it would otherwise be chaotic and incomprehensible.

18 The same symbolism of dressing anew and a person's admittance to the sacred community of God's believers also occurs in the baptism ceremony, wherein the newly baptized has his/her clothes removed and changed with new ones symbolizing his/her entry into a new state.

17

THE EVIL EYE AMONG THE GREEKS OF AUSTRALIA

Identity, continuity and modernization

Vassiliki Chryssanthopoulou

> Even the Lord Christ, even He was frightened of the evil eye.

An elderly Castellorizian migrant in Perth, Western Australia, uttered this proverbial phrase in answer to my question about the power of the evil eye. She went on to narrate the following explanatory myth that she had heard from her grandmother.

> The story is, that Christ passed by an olive tree. He tasted an olive and it was so sweet that He said: 'How sweet it is!' Then the tree fell down. And the Disciples said: 'What have you done, Lord? The poor people eat of this tree.' He said: 'I put the evil eye on it. But take three olive leaves (*vayia*) and put them on the censer and the evil will go away. I shall teach you some words to say when you suffer from the evil eye, so that it disappears. And you will also put a few olive leaves on the censer.' And this is the *vayia* [the narrator continued]. Not these other things that people use today. When you are suddenly feeling weak while you were feeling fine before, then you are suffering from the evil eye. You burn your censer, you put incense inside, you put three olive leaves on it, you make the sign of the cross over them and say:
>
> > Christ passed by
> > He touched with His left hand
> > He scattered all evil,
> > The male and the female snake
> > And the evil neighbour.
> > May as many Saints help you
> > As many eyes see you.
>
> You take handfuls of this smoke and pass it over your face, and the evil goes away immediately. I do this for myself on my own.

The concept and its interpretations

This narrative contains condensed information on beliefs surrounding the evil eye, as followed by many Castellorizians and other Greeks of Australia, especially immigrants. These beliefs and ways of dealing with the evil eye are similar to those prevailing throughout Greece. The incorporation of the evil eye belief in the cosmology of Christianity, as manifested in the informant's narrative above, is especially interesting; it is also important as it proves how strong and widespread belief in the evil eye is: Christ Himself in this human manifestation involuntarily admired the olive tree for its sweet fruit; this admiration resulted in Him putting the evil eye on it, thus destroying what set it apart and made it enviable.[1] However, 'he who has harmed will also cure'. Thus Christ, according to the narrative, revealed to man the cure for the evil eye, by teaching people the spell and the ritual actions they have to perform, but also the objects they have to use to achieve this aim.

'Our Church also believes in the [evil] eye,' elderly Castellorizians often retorted to young, Australian-born ones who relegated this belief to the order of superstition. Believers in the evil eye had a special prayer (*efhi epi vaskanian*), which priests are invited by sufferers and their relatives to read to possible victims of the evil eye. Most Castellorizians, however, would cure the evil eye by applying traditional practices. Initially, Christianity did not condone concepts such as the evil eye, which were seen as pagan by the early Church Fathers, such as St Basil (Dundes 1981, 259).[2] As time went by, however, the Orthodox Church incorporated many of the beliefs constituting part of the cultural values of its followers (Veikou 1998, 64). The evil eye or *vaskania*, as it is referred to in the religious texts, is attributed to envy, which is born of the Devil:

> we implore You, keep away and chase away from Your servant (name) any action of the devil, any attack and any evil attempt by Satan, as well as any cunning curiosity and evil damage by the eyes of harmful and cunning people; and whether this happened either because of beauty or bravery or happiness or jealousy and envy or by *vaskania*. You, benevolent Lord, extend your strong arm ... and send an Angel of peace to him.
>
> (*Mikron Efhologion,* 1981, 276)

Belief in the evil eye and practices centring on its avoidance are widespread in the Indo-European and the Semitic world and especially so in countries of the Mediterranean, in Africa north of the Sahara, in the Middle East, in India and in Latin America, which was colonized by Spanish speakers. However, such beliefs and practices do not exist among the natives of Australia, Oceania, North and South America, nor in Africa south of the Sahara (Dundes 1981, 259). Belief in the evil eye is also widespread among communities of migrants and their descendants from Europe and Asia to America and Australia (Schoeck (1955) 1977, 227; Jones, Hand, Stein, in Dundes 1981, 150–68, 169–80, 223–57

respectively; Chryssanthopoulou 1993, 351–65). Despite local variation, beliefs connected with the evil eye and, in particular, ways of diagnosing and curing it are very similar. On the basis of this similarity, various theories attempting to explain such beliefs have been formulated. Dundes, for example, sees its origin in the fundamental opposition *wet:dry* which in Indo-European and Semitic ideology corresponds to the opposition *life:death*. Through the use of many examples, he shows that the evil eye is seen as the draining of vital liquids, of the victim's vitality by the one who puts the evil eye on him, and that it can be cured by restoring physiological and symbolic balance (Dundes 1981, 257–98).

Belief in the evil eye is widespread in ancient Greek and Roman texts and art and is substantiated by archaeological evidence, such as amulets and other apotropaic objects aimed at keeping away its evil influence.[3] The motif of the head of Medusa or the Gorgon found in Graeco-Roman art is expressive of this belief. Medusa, whose gaze turned the viewer to stone, was killed by Perseus who offered the severed head to Athena. The latter used it as a symbol of power on her suit of armour and ancient Greeks adopted it as an apotropaic and protective symbol on theirs (Veikou 1998, 50–1). In Plato's *Phaedo,* Socrates is presented as warning Cebes not to praise him excessively 'so that no evil eye may affect our coming discussion' (*Phaedo,* 95b 5–6, in Veikou 1998, 55).

In modern Greece, many folklorists, such as Polites, Megas, Loukatos, Romaios and the Byzantinist Koukoules, have studied the evil eye, as have several anthropologists such as Blum, Dionysopoulos-Mass, Hardie, Campbell, Du Boulay, Peristiany, Hirschon, Herzfeld and Stewart, among others. The most comprehensive anthropological analysis of the evil eye in Greece, however, is to be found in Christina Veikou's recent book, *Evil Eye: The Social Construction of Visual Communication.*[4] This study presents the phenomenon as a fundamental cultural construct which conveys the values of the community investigated, its cohesion, as well as the clashes and the negotiation of identity, as they are all expressed through embodied beliefs and practices.

Belief in the evil eye entails that a person, man or woman, has the ability, voluntarily or not, to harm another person or his property through the power of his eye. Beliefs as to what may be affected by the evil eye and how its symptoms are manifested vary according to society, since people's fears are to a great extent culturally constructed: 'Fears themselves are produced through collective apprehension, through a kind of involuntary agreement, and become transmitted through tradition. They are unique in a given society' (Mauss (1902) 1972, 129). Generally, however, the evil eye affects negatively whatever is of value for the survival and reproduction of a community (Veikou 1998, 143–5), as well as those goods and situations that are crucial, but not completed yet (Schoeck (1955) 1977, 229). These two categories of goods are interrelated, as I hope to illustrate in what follows.

Goods of value for the survival and reproduction of a community include the appearance and health of its members, the children who ensure its continuity and the fundamental elements of its productive economy. Thus, the

Sarakatsani nomads of north-western Greece believed that their animals, which constituted the basis of their economy and survival, were particularly susceptible to the danger of the evil eye, whether it came from a malevolent neighbour or their own wives during menstruation, when they were considered polluted (Campbell 1964, 31). In the refugee community of Neo Kastro in Macedonia, where viticulture and farming in general form the basis of the economy, several narratives featuring the evil eye refer to its ability to dry vines and trees (Veikou 1998, 144). In other cultures, the terms of reference may be different, but the phenomenon is the same. In a small town of fishermen on the Amazon the inhabitants do not talk of the evil eye, but of *panema,* i.e the spiteful disposition of an acquaintance or a neighbour which may render their fishing nets empty. Such is the fear of *panema* that fishermen hesitate to sell fish caught in new nets or by a new flying-line (Schoeck (1955) 1977, 229).

The concept of envy is fundamental to the understanding of the evil eye. The evil eye can harm, whether intentionally or not. In an ethnographic analysis of a farming community in Portugal, Cutileiro mentions that the inhabitants distinguish these two cases both as terms and as concepts: *quebranto* is the unintentional influence of the evil eye, and *mau olhado* is its intentional influence (Cutileiro 1971, 274). This distinction parallels Evans-Pritchard's classic distinction between witchcraft and sorcery. His pioneering anthropological study of the Azande, a tribe in Southern Sudan, laid the foundations for understanding the concept of the evil eye in relation to witchcraft. The Azande distinguish between *witchcraft* and *sorcery*. It is believed that a person who possesses *witchcraft* has from birth the psychic power to harm others in a specific manner. The Azande believe that this power is inherited unilineally, namely from father to son and from mother to daughter. Sorcery, however, employs a practical, mechanistic approach. The sorcerer uses certain practical means, such as herbs, to achieve his aim, thus forcing supernatural powers to collaborate with him (Evans-Pritchard 1937, *passim*).

The idea of the unintentional psychic power that emanates from a person whenever he admires or 'envies' another person or a thing, not necessarily maliciously, is a fundamental part of the concept of the evil eye. Thus in Greece, people believe that the evil eye can be put on small children even by their own mothers, or by members of their families who take unmalicious pride in them. The Sarakatsani, the transhumant nomads mentioned above, incorporate the evil eye in the cosmology of Orthodoxy, believing as they do that it constitutes a demonic influence due to people's weak and sinful nature, a nature prone to jealousy (Campbell 1964, 337–40). Therefore, we are all potentially carriers of the evil eye and we can harm others unintentionally. An elderly Castellorizian woman from Perth clearly expressed the connection between the evil eye and the Devil:

> We Christian women who are christened and have got holy oil [myrrh] on us, we are envied by the enemy [i.e the Devil], who pursues us and wants to

> destroy us. Sometimes I come back home feeling very weak. And while I am seated, my tears start flowing and I start yawning. This is good. People say that the evil eye goes away in this way.[5]

However, the Castellorizians of Perth pointed out specific persons whom they considered ill-intentioned and whose power they dreaded:

> This woman – whenever I see her, I run away. And whenever she gives me wishes, I am petrified and I am sure that something bad will happen to me. She does not have a good eye. I think that she is not a good person.

This statement refers to an Australian-born Castellorizian woman who used to belong to the elite of the community, but gradually lost her high socio-economic position. Her eye is considered to be especially evil, since people are convinced that she is jealous of those relatives and acquaintances of hers who have continued to prosper.

A psychoanalytical approach also suggests the idea of envy, combined with aggressiveness, as an interpretation of the evil eye. In his essay entitled *Das Unheimlich*, written between 1917 and 1920, Freud suggests that the fear of the evil eye is due to the projection of the feelings of the person potentially affected by its influence onto other people: 'Whoever possesses something valuable, but fragile, fears other people's envy. He projects upon them the jealousy that he himself would feel if he were in their position' (Schoeck (1955) 1977, 228).

In her book Veikou provides a semantic analysis of the evil eye, which she examines in the context of the ideology and values of the community of Neo Kastro. The Kastriots believe that the evil eye is a quasi-automatic social reaction against any person who acts in an independent way, thus disregarding, intentionally or not, social uniformity and convention. A well-dressed woman returning from town laden with shopping knows that she will be affected by the intense looks that she attracts while walking. The same holds for a hard-working man who has managed to increase his property. The evil eye recognizes and exposes the anti-social feelings of jealousy and envy deriving from competition which communal rhetoric conceals. Difference and ostentation provoke aggressiveness and envy in the form of the evil eye and contrast with egalitarianism which is stressed as a communal ideal (Veikou 1998, 239–50). That the evil eye is attracted by dissimilarity and autonomy, interpreted by some people as inimical to the community and its values, can be seen in the following words of an elderly Castellorizian woman: '[People] are jealous of me. I am too independent. [The phrase "too independent" was said in English.] I am not like other women. I have my parents' blessing and the help of the Mother of God.' This quotation makes it evident that this woman believes that she is influenced by the evil eye. Interestingly, however, this same non-conformist woman is also perceived as wielding the evil eye herself, as has already been mentioned.

Although it punishes people transgressing uniformity and established values and ways, the community nevertheless cures them and helps them return to health through the ritual removal of the evil eye, or *xematiasma*. This is an interaction between individual and community by which the social personality of the person affected is recreated. This cure is achieved not only through the words and actions of which the ritual consists, but also through the social approval shown to the person suffering from the evil eye. All this is expressed by an idiom of *incorporation* or *embodiment* which presents the whole sequence of being affected by the evil eye and then being cured of it, as expressed through the body.[6]

Not only does the evil eye affect people and objects vital for the survival and reproduction of a community; it also affects individuals in a liminal or transitional situation, and therefore particularly vulnerable. Pregnant women who have not become mothers yet, newly delivered mothers (*lechones*) who have not completed the forty-day cycle of the post-partum period, babies who have not been blessed and christened in church yet, thus not having been symbolically accepted as members of the community, and couples before their wedding – all these are considered to be in great danger of the evil eye, and are consequently surrounded by ritual precautions (Chryssanthopoulou 1984, 5–11). In his analysis of the structure of rituals performed in various cultures, van Gennep made a useful distinction consisting of three stages in people's progression through *rites of passage* or *life crisis rituals*: separation from the previous condition, transition or liminality, and incorporation into the new situation or status (Van Gennep (1909) 1977, *passim*). While in transition, people find themselves in relatively unstructured areas of society. Thus they are considered both vulnerable and dangerous. The concept of *miasma*, or *pollution*, surrounding a new mother or unbaptized child is an indirect way in which society controls these liminal individuals. Such individuals are ritually avoided or segregated, hence protecting both the individuals and the rest of society, which is in a disordered and hence vulnerable state (Douglas 1966, 102). The danger of the evil eye affecting the bridegroom or the bride during a wedding ceremony constitutes a well-known case in point in Greek culture. It belongs to the same structural and ideological framework as the familiar *ambodema*, namely the 'tying' of the groom by spells and other magical means which prevents his sexual intercourse with the bride.[7] The relationship between the two cultural phenomena is expressed in the following words by an elderly Castellorizian woman:

> If a woman is jealous of the groom, she can perform magic while the priest utters the first word of the wedding service so that the groom may not be able to sleep with his wife. That's why they put a pair of scissors on the person of the groom, so that it cuts the evil tongues. They also put an amulet containing olive leaves (*vayia*), a small cross, a black bean, so that it renders your eye black, or a net as it has a cross (a *pentalpha*) on it.

The evil eye in the pre-wedding rituals of the Castellorizians of Perth

The original ethnographic information used in this chapter derives from fieldwork conducted in Perth, Western Australia, mainly during 1984–1986 (see Chryssanthopoulou 1993). This section examines the position of the evil eye in the beliefs and rituals of the Castellorizians of Perth. In particular, I focus my analysis on the role of the evil eye in the formation of their ethnic identity within the broader Australian social and cultural context. I also look at the role of the evil eye in transmitting this culture and identity from one migrant generation to another.

Perth, the capital of Western Australia, has a flourishing Greek community numbering about 15,000. About 7,000 are Castellorizians, either immigrants or Australian-born – 'Cazzies', as they call themselves and are referred to by other Australians. Cazzies are mostly second- and third-generation adults. Castellorizian migration started towards the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of young and ambitious men from the island of Castellorizo or the Castellorizian settlements in Egypt. These men sought their fortune either in the goldmines of Australia or in businesses they set up, such as oyster bars or hotels-cum-bars which provided their customers with food, drink and accommodation. Most Castellorizians, however, migrated to Perth during the three decades before the Second World War through *chain migration*, that is, by inviting or by being invited by their relatives and friends. Today, the inhabitants of Castellorizo do not exceed 200, while in Australia there are several thousands of Castellorizians who maintain a distinct collective identity in the context of the Greek and Australian communities.[8]

The pre-wedding rituals of the Castellorizians of Perth provide a framework within which fundamental cultural values and symbols constituting the ethnic identity, collective and personal, of this group are expressed, reproduced, transmitted and changed. Castellorizians themselves consider wedding rituals as an epitome of their distinctive identity. 'It was just like a Cazzie wedding,' said a young, second-generation Castellorizian male, in reference to the conference of the World Castellorizian Association, which took place in Perth in 1986. Pre-wedding rituals are rites of passage through which the transition of individuals from unmarried to married status is realized. They are saturated with cultural symbols that, in their turn, lead to 'emotional symbolic reinforcement of ethnic patterns' (De Vos 1975, 26). Moreover, in pre-wedding rituals the danger of being affected by the evil eye and the evil tongue is greater, since the couple-to-be and their families are exposed to the inquisitive eyes of other members of the community when the couple's happiness is at a peak.

Here we look at the most important pre-wedding rituals of the Castellorizians of Perth, namely, *votania* and *mousoukarfia*. The focus of my analysis rests on the expression and negotiation of values and practices concerning the evil eye. Castellorizians characteristically refer to these two rituals by their native names, even when speaking in English or when referring to the evil eye, which they nor-

mally refer to as *to mati* or *to matiko*. These and other words, which also convey the experience of shared values and a shared past, thus function as symbols of their ethnic identity, standing like landmarks that express their cultural distinctiveness in the midst of the flow of their English conversation.

The *votania* ritual is part of the *Savvatovrado*, the separate gathering of relatives and friends in the family homes of bride and bridegroom on the Saturday before the wedding. The families involved collect *votania,* or lavender, in a white cloth tied at the top. This is placed on the floor of the house or in the garden, or on a table. On the top of the *votania* is set a tray in which incense burns. Then they 'smoke the clothes'. That is, the clothes to be worn by the bride and the bridegroom in church are brought, covered or packed in boxes, and are ritually held over the burning incense. Meanwhile, the participants sing, invoking on the couple's behalf the help of God, the saints, relatives and fate.

> Tonight it is *Savvatovrado* and there is a smell of incense.
> May the clothes perfumed with incense bring good luck.
>
> Come, blessing of the Mother of God and of the Holy Trinity,
> Come, blessing of your trusted godmother and of your sweet mother.

Later the *votania* are ritually scattered throughout the house. A close relative of the bridegroom or of the bride, man or woman, makes three ritual circles round the house or the table. Accompanied by the songs of the participants, the friend carries the *votania* and scatters them through the house. They are not cleaned up until the day after the wedding. The songs accompanying the scattering of the *votania* also invoke supernatural assistance for the protection of the newly married couple.

> Saint Nicholas of Myra with your grey beard,
> Come and give your blessing to the *votania* tonight.

To my questions regarding the meaning of the 'smoking of the clothes', some Castellorizians replied that it was good for the house. Elderly Castellorizians spread incense round their homes on a daily basis, to ensure protection against all evil and the Devil, whom they refer to as *o ehthros,* or 'the enemy'.

> The censer and *vayia* are a must. You hang *vayia* behind your door and they do not let any evil, demon or other enemies come inside, as they have a cross on them. I am not boasting, but I have not had any burglaries all these years, and I never stopped censing the house.

Consequently, censing constitutes a ritual way of cleansing the house and protecting its entrances, because it creates a symbolic, metaphysical circle of protection for the house and its residents. Its use in the marriage ceremony is

therefore necessary, as danger looms over the still unmarried couple, the evil eye being the main peril.

The symbolism of the *votania*, which are first blessed through censing and then are ritually scattered around the house, should be seen in conjunction with the meaning of the censing of the clothes of bride and bridegroom. When asked about the meaning of this custom, most Castellorizians said that it takes place 'so that the house has a lovely perfume' or that 'it is good for the house'. An elderly Castellorizian settled in Rhodes told me that by spreading *votania* people exorcized evil and purified the home of all demonic influence. But why did they use the *votania*? The original ritual as carried out in Castellorizo offers the answer. In fact, the ritual still takes place there, with some changes, of course.

In Castellorizo the *votania,* herbs growing wild on the hills of the island and on neighbouring islands, were gathered on Friday before the wedding by boys both of whose parents were alive (*amphithaleis*). The auspicious gender and good fate of the boys would, it was hoped, influence the fertility and luck of the couple.[9] Baskets filled with *votania* were left in chapels on the hills overnight. The following morning they would be ritually carried by the same boys, who had not eaten anything until that time, to the homes of bride and bridegroom where the ritual was to take place. The initial version of the custom, which contains elements drawn from nature, the locus of fertility *par excellence*, clearly demonstrates that *votania* express and solicit fertility. Their censing, together with the censing of the bride's and bridegroom's clothes, as well as the boys' fasting and the churching of the *votania,* all reinforce the initial aim: to secure highly desirable fertility and protection from dangers such as that of the evil eye. The ritual prohibition among Castellorizians of Perth that the bride should not plant *votania* before giving birth to her first daughter also expresses the connection of this ritual with fertility.

Mousoukarfia, another pre-wedding ritual, takes place two to five weeks before weddings in Perth. In Castellorizo *mousoukarfia* used to take place on Thursdays before the wedding ceremony. Since the 1970s the ritual has been combined with the Australian custom of the *kitchen tea,* which previously had constituted a separate occasion in Perth. In the current form of the ritual, female relatives and friends of the bride gather in her parental home on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, to bring her 'presents for the kitchen', as they say. These gifts, which relate to the equipping of the household in general, are opened and displayed to all participants at the end of the ritual and after tea has been served. At such an event, the good fate of the prospective bride as well as her gifts are exposed to many eyes and may provoke the evil eye, intentionally or not. This possibility may have led, whether consciously or not, to the merging of these two ritual occasions so that the *mousoukarfia* ritual might protect the bride against the evil eye.

After the women invited to the event have sat down in the parlour, the bride fetches a bowl filled with cloves, or *mousoukarfia,* as Castellorizians call them.

These cloves have been soaked in water overnight. Thread, needles and cloves are distributed in abundance to those present. The bride's mother is the first to thread a gold coin as well as three cloves. Then all the women, in order of priority depending on closeness of relationship and age, thread three cloves each, thus creating a necklace for the bride. Throughout the ritual the women sing rhythmically, invoking supernatural protection for the bride and praising her many qualities. The bride later places the necklace in her jewel-box and does not touch it again until handing it over to her daughter. (I saw such a necklace hanging on the side of the bridal bed during its ritual construction during the display of the girl's dowry. The latter is another occasion which may involve the risk of the bride and her property falling victim to the evil eye.) The guests also thread cloves to form for themselves necklaces and bracelets which they take home when they leave. Cloves wrapped in cellophane are also offered to those invited to the ritual making of the marital bed, or *krevati*.

What is the purpose of *mousoukarfia?*

The answers I received from Castellorizian informants varied greatly. *Mousoukarfia* is celebrated 'for good luck' or 'for the house to have a lovely perfume', as also happens with *votania.* In Castellorizo, the water in which cloves had been soaked was used to wash the bridegroom's hair. Two elderly Castellorizian women, however, directly related the *mousoukarfia* ritual to the evil eye: 'They use cloves for the (evil) eye', a woman said to me, and added that she became aware of it when she saw cloves used in an amulet for a baby in Thessaly, central Greece. Another elderly woman informed me that the *mousoukarfia* ritual is not done for women who marry again, since 'it is only for those pure'. The evil eye is expected to affect women marrying for the first time, who are younger and whose fertility and sexuality have not been tested yet.

To understand the anti-evil eye properties of cloves, one needs to see them within their broader framework of meaning. Etymologically speaking, the word itself means 'perfumed nail'. The shape of the clove also suggests a kind of nail. A Castellorizian woman once said to me that a way to ward off the evil eye is to stretch out the fingers of one palm, thus forming the *mountza* gesture while at the same time pronouncing the following spell against people who may cast the evil eye: 'Nails to your eyes!' The use of a nail, as well as other sharp objects and symbols to exorcize the evil eye, is widespread. The use of a nail in magic to render the victim susceptible to the harmful will of the magician is also common.[10] Apart from its apotropaic symbolism, the *mousoukarfia* necklace is also a strong expression of the protective attitude of the community towards the bride, who is vulnerable because in a liminal state. This is an example of Turner's *communitas*, namely, of the protective attitude of the community towards ritually weak and liminal individuals (Turner 1969, 125). However, not all Castellorizians feel comfortable with this custom. At a kitchen tea held by a second-generation Castellorizian woman, there was a brief and hasty performance of the *mousoukarfia* ritual. The women invited prepared only one necklace for the bride, who was visibly irritated. 'Maria does not want *mousoukarfia*. She

says that it is a silly custom,' her mother said in an apologetic manner, while some elderly Castellorizian women commented sadly, 'Young people do not want these things. They do not understand them.'

In our discussions, several second- and third-generation women clearly rejected the idea of the evil eye as a superstition that does not suit educated people today. Other women were hesitant. They stressed the fact that though the Orthodox Church accepts the evil eye, they were also worried about the opinion of their Anglo-Australian acquaintances, were the latter to find out that the Castellorizians believed in the evil eye. Finally, there were various Castellorizians who subscribed to this belief and employed it in their personal behaviour and cosmology.

Rituals, continuity and modernization in the context of migration

How, then, are we to interpret the phenomenon of the evil eye? First, the evil eye is a culturally specific illness and should thus be examined within the context of the community in which it appears. Second, it is not sufficient to focus our attention only on rituals employed to diagnose and cure the evil eye, in order to understand it. Relevant beliefs and practices are often incorporated as a latent if dominant idea and value into rites of passage such as the pre-wedding rituals of the Castellorizian Greeks of Perth. Since rituals are imbued with cultural symbols, these are expressed and transmitted to participants in rituals, together with their associated values. This does not mean that all those participating in a ritual interpret a cultural symbol in the same way, as one can see from the examples we have just examined. However, the power of symbols lies in their ability to create a sense of belonging in a community which relies on the sharing of common forms rather than a common content. Community created through symbols does not necessarily imply homogeneity (Cohen 1985, 20). The sharing of symbols creates a community of feelings among the individuals belonging to the same group. Thus there are Castellorizians who follow the traditional pre-wedding rituals which have decidedly apotropaic character, despite their rejection of belief in the evil eye. 'I love wedding customs. I will have them at my wedding, whether I marry a Greek or not,' a young third-generation Castellorizian said to me, visibly delighted by the festive atmosphere prevailing at the celebration at his cousin's *Savvatovrado*.

Finally, even when belief in the evil eye is not explicitly stated, its concomitant cultural values and attitudes may still exist in a community. As various scholars have pointed out, often people do not talk about the evil eye, but about an evil tongue, evil mouth or evil thought (Schoeck (1955) 1977, 229). Thus Castellorizians also recognize the influence of gossip in their community and try to avoid it. 'Everything becomes known. Nobody can escape here,' a well-known gossip said mischievously and commented on the power she derived from gossip. 'I get angry with myself. Why should I learn all this? I know more than necessary.' A young, third-generation Castellorizian confided to me that

his sister had been living away from the family home before marriage. Those phoning her, however, were told only that she was not at home. In this way, her parents attempted to avoid community gossip. Similarly, many young Castellorizian and other Greek couples hide their relationships from other young friends, and go out secretly, for fear that the news may be spread in the community. This would lead to their parents putting pressure on them.

The Castellorizians of Perth are internally divided along socio-economic and class lines. They have their own elite which sets the pace of community life particularly in the area of religion and customs. Competition between elite families centres around leadership in churches, charity and the precise adherence to the correct form of the wedding rituals. The news of the forthcoming marriage of a Castellorizian woman to a suitable groom, preferably of Castellorizian or other Greek origin, is expected to trigger envy among other Castellorizians whose tongue and eye are feared by the prospective couple and their families. 'Better be eaten by the tongue of a snake than by that of people,' an elderly Castellorizian immigrant said emphatically. In-group rivalry and comp-etition and rivalry between Castellorizians and other Greeks of Perth, expressed and promoted through gossip, are important for the maintenance of a moral community in which the idea of the evil eye continues to exist. This is the case, even though the members of this community may ostensibly reject it or even express adherence to it in a different way.

Moreover, despite the fear of educated, Australian-born Castellorizians lest they appear superstitious, should they declare belief in the evil eye, they resort to the traditional Australian attitude, the 'tall poppy syndrome', which applauds social homogeneity and conformity. Those who do not conform stick out like 'tall poppies'. The rich and ostentatious, when they suffer misfortune, are said to have been 'served right'. Thus the attitudes expressed in the evil eye coincide with some of the values of the broader Anglo-Australian context.

Notes

1 In Mark 11: 12–15, 20–3, Christ curses a barren fig tree, whereupon it dries up completely. See also the spell quoted by Veikou in Ch. 16.
2 See above, Ch. 9 and Ch. 15.
3 On the archaeology of the evil eye in the early Christian period, see above, Ch. 10.
4 See also above, Ch. 16.
5 See also Hirschon 1989: 22, on the meaning of holy oil for the Asia Minor refugees of Kokkinia, Piraeus.
6 The concept of embodiment was introduced to the social sciences by Bourdieu 1977.
7 On *ambodema* see Oikonomopoulos 1990: 199–222.
8 On the history of Castellorizian migration, see Chryssanthopoulou-Farrington 1986: *passim*, and Chryssanthopoulou 1993: 39–41. On Castellorizo generally, see Hatzifotis 1982: *passim*.
9 The magical use of the *pais amphithalês* is also attested in ancient Greek wedding rituals. On magic related to fertility in contemporary Greece, see below, Ch. 19.

10 On the use of necklaces made of nails and worn by pregnant women, see Oikonomopoulos 1983: *passim*. He interprets this custom as an attempt to ensure a successful pregnancy. However, it is also an attempt to ward off the evil eye which threatens these women.

Nails were also used in black magic in the ancient Greek world. See, for example, the *katadesmoi*, curse tablets pierced with nails: D. Jordan, 'Mia Isagogi stis Ekdoseis Arhaion Magikon Keimenon', in Christidis and Jordan (eds) 1997: 147–52.

18

THE ENCHANTED GARMENT

Nikos Xenios

This chapter considers the usage over time of a type of magic present throughout Greek culture: cloth fetishism, which involves a fairy in bondage, a substitute for erotic desire, and the 'instrument' of the veil. Popular and learned literary narratives about magical practices associated with garments exist in many traditions. The garment also carries its own symbolism in the language of dreams (Jung), where it acquires the features of an *archetype*, and has the same anthropological value as nudity. 'Homeopathic' magic includes many individual practices as well as regional versions of particular practices. In 'primitive' cultures the garment is invested with moral qualities which survive to this day. It functions as a vehicle for numerous magical properties and, by means of a 'magic-like' operation, passes these properties on to its user. According to social anthropologists, the impregnation of a garment with a liquid in keeping with a magical formula belongs to the 'private' sphere of magic, which may indeed be viewed as 'black' magic.

Substitution I

As a method, black magic at first presupposes a high degree of treachery or, in general, evil intent. In Euripides' *Ion*, for instance, Creusa in collusion with her old servant (the pedagogue) selects the form of 'deceit' to be used; and he offers her the following advice: 'For this reason, perform a womanly act, and either by the sword or by deceit or with poison kill your husband and his child, before you receive death from their hand' (843–6). What the heroine effectively attempts to achieve is somehow to 'exorcize' death. And in order to fool death, one has but to use *mêtis*, that is practical 'cunning'. The characters' 'cunning' becomes the central theme of the action, both in the cinema and chiefly in those dramatic art forms which represent romantic periods or simply romantic dispositions. The trick usually involves a specific practice of 'magic', namely the technique of *substitution*.

Feelings of jealousy, divine envy, impaired erotic disposition, or simply rivalry may be embodied in the tragedies of Euripides, something which, for that matter, occurs in Homer and the entire tradition of drama which preceded

Euripides. In *Ion*, Creusa cries out: 'Woe! The stabbing pain in my entrails!' (765–7). The manifestations of this particular feeling include bodily pains, a 'pricking' of the lungs or other feelings of bodily pain or grief.

Mania (*Wahnsinn*)[1] is the term which may approximate to the uncontrolled feeling that overcomes the hero or heroine and arouses the desire to seek revenge, to poison and to destroy in general. In the *Bacchae*, where ceremonial magic is reduced to a cohesive system of codes, we have a sublime dramatic portrayal of 'mania', the 'divine illness'. The magic which occurs on stage refers back to Plato (*Phaedros* 245a and the *Republic*), who mentions itinerant 'charmers' able to perform binding spells, that turn the spirits of the dead against the living (*Republic* 364B5–365A3; see *Laws* 933 A–E).[2] In *Medea*, the protagonist wants her rival, Glauce, to experience the same pain (and by means of magic realizes her wish). Thus Medea soaks her robe in poison and delivers it, by means of a ploy, as a wedding gift (and as a supposed gesture of noble-mindedness) to the unfortunate princess. The theme of the magical, 'homeopathic' use of personal items occurs in other tragedies too. Creusa's dilemma consists in choosing between two herbs, a therapeutic elixir and a deadly poison. Finally in *Hippolytus*, among other – purely decorative – objects, we find a 'gorgoneion', that is a Medusa's head, and a golden necklace representing a snake, the symbol of the succession to the throne. The hero's 'sympathetic' association with these symbolic objects is reminiscent of more recent traditions, according to which 'witches' require that they be supplied either with hair from the person their client wants to affect or with garments (usually underwear), which are treated magically in order to harm the victim.

Substitution II

Man attempts to harm or conquer the erotic – or other – object of his desire by substituting the real with the imaginary. Often, by placing on a person's effigy a piece of their clothing or a sample of their hair, the magician believes that what he does to the effigy is also transferred to the particular person. Here we have a mixture of 'homeopathy' and 'contagious' magic. If the fundamental elements which constitute the world of magic consist of voice (incantations, invocations, prayers, curses, and so on), movement (including dance, mime, rituals, making the sign of the cross) and their implements, then it is easy to appreciate the garment's function as an 'instrument'. Together with the herbs, the intoxicating substances which induce visions, the burning of incense, the crucifixes and other objects, the magician uses clothing (and in Euripides' *Bacchae* the disguise or 'transvestism' of Pentheus), and even make-up, in an attempt to bring about the desirable outcome in a homeopathic – and transmissible – way.[3]

The veil already appears as an implement of 'magic' in Homer's *Odyssey*, when the nymph Leucothea rescues Odysseus from certain drowning by means of a kerchief (*Odyssey* 5: 333).[4] In papyri we often come across the magical use of animal skins, sometimes for therapeutic purposes. Thus, covering oneself

with a hyena's skin is recommended as a cure for coughs. Hercules' lion's hide performs a similar protective function. On other occasions, the garment itself carries 'substitution' to the extent that we encounter the veil in lieu of its bearer. Such, for instance, is the case of the mythical *veil* which was snatched in place of Helen of Troy, an explanatory motive of the Trojan war.[5]

One could mention numerous examples from Mediterranean cultures, as well as other 'primitive' cultures studied by social anthropologists, in order to establish that the attire, in whole or in part, can be considered an implement of magic. Furthermore, the magical relation between clothing and metaphysics is evident in the vestments of a shaman or contemporary clergyman. Special garments are used not only to enhance the solemnity of a ceremony but because of the power these garments are believed to incorporate. At this point it is worth referring to the magical power of the 'golden fleece', which retains its omnipotence only within the context of the eastern cult of the Sun, that is in Colchis, the land of its provenance, which also happens to be Medea's homeland. The theft of the fleece from its place of origin automatically removes its magical qualities, which are nevertheless regenerated – through a 'double projection' – as soon as Medea comes into contact with her metaphysical origins and employs the golden fleece to commit the crime of infanticide.[6]

Euripides exploits this tradition and turns it into an effective theatrical tool in his *Medea*, where the heroine is described as 'Gorgo', 'Empousa', 'Harpyia', 'Lytta', 'Echidna', 'Erinys', 'Alastor', 'a bearer of many evils', as a woman totally lacking the normal moral code of the average Greek female. This 'heinous nature', this 'divine disease' which afflicts Medea corresponds to the 'mania' in Sophocles' *Ajax*, to Creusa's divine incitement in Euripides' *Ion* and to possession in the *Bacchae*. As mentioned earlier, Medea sends the harmful veil as a wedding present to Princess Glauce. Burnt alive, Glauce suffers a terrible death for a crime she did not commit.

Medea's act of taking the law into her own hands is recognized as a vested right, both by the myth and by the tragic poet, 'Despite the lioness's look with which she stabs her slaves' (*Medea* 187–8). Like a lion, beyond human limits, Medea 'παραλλάσσει τὰς φρένας' ('warps the honest souls')[7] of the Chorus and turns into a typical witch.

Enactment

In his work *On Mysteries*, Iamblichus[8] avers that 'the road to Salvation is not to be found in Reason, but in ritual cults. Divine union (that is, the union of man with the divine) is achieved only through ritual, that is, the performance of ineffable deeds carried out in the proper manner, actions which lie beyond all understanding, as well as through the power of unutterable symbols which only the gods can understand' (*On Mysteries* 96. 13, Parthey). When one cannot imagine that this ram is Iphigeneia, then ostensibly one need only name it 'Iphigeneia', and so on. And this ostensibly simplistic 'act of substitution' is but

the beginning of magic. Exactly the same applies to the 'appurtenances' of this practice, particularly garments. Wittgenstein mentions the ritual 'adoption' of a child, during which the mother places the child under her clothes. It is clear that the beginnings of theatre are to be found in this magical representational form. This procedure also constitutes the 'performance' of a desire which has not yet been satisfied.[9] We may mention here the example (also cited by Wittgenstein) of *The Song of the Nibelungen*: King Gunther, Siegfried's good friend, has decided to marry Brunhilde, and Siegfried is the only person who can help him win her in the ensuing contests, thanks to his unique power, particularly his *magic mantle*, which makes him invisible and invulnerable.

Popular magic

Popular magic is usually the last resort for those in despair, those whose hopes have been defeated both by God and by human beings.[10] Popular theosophy is apt to flourish during historical periods when values undergo an acute crisis (be they religious values, the questioning of which deprives entire generations of their metaphysical shelter, or broader humanistic-sociopolitical values, such as communism or democracy, etc.). During these generally transitional periods, the average person turns to parapsychology, astrology, divination, that is magic in its various forms. In ancient Greek literary texts we find numerous examples of magical practices, which are also to be found in non-literary works.[11]

Hellenistic and, in particular, early Roman texts are full of recipes and references to herbs and 'aggressive' magical recipes. As for the neo-Hellenic tradition, and particularly the fairy tale, it is almost exclusively founded on, and becomes reified in the popular tacit assumption (and often enjoyment) of its magical components: the *nereid*'s veil, which if you snatch it, turns its owner into your captive; the magic mantle which makes the hero invulnerable and invisible; the cloth on which the incantation to free the princess from spells is to be written; but also forms of acutely *aggressive* (black) magic, such as the garments endowed with supernatural powers, the magic carpet, the sock with satanic symbols, and so on. The Orthodox Church has classified most of the relevant beliefs and practices as belonging to the world of Satanism.

The garment

The semantics of the garment can be traced mainly in popular oneiromancy (divination by means of dreams), as well as in the use of animal entrails, plants and herbs, psychic divination (dreams, premonitions, visions), image and fire divination, 'invocations' and related parapsychological phenomena.

The experience of dreaming is certainly associated – in the field of fantasy – with the figurative 'fire' of passionate love:[12] see Sophocles fr. 474 (Pearson ii: 128; Winkler 1990: 85), and Plato *Charmides* (155d): 'Then I caught a sight of the inside of his garment and was set afire, and could no longer control myself.'

This ecstatic dimension of love may originally have referred to the 'idiolect' of dream language. From antiquity to our time popular fantasy presents, within the framework of male fantasies, the witch gathering herbs in the nude (that is having shed her social identity). Thus the witch turns into an object of erotic desire. According, for example, to local traditions on Lesbos concerning fairies and the function of their garments, 'they wear white, flimsy silk dresses, long and wide, like a tunic, open in the middle and buttoned at the side'; or velvet, azure, lace and gold-embroidered garments 'which shine in the moonlight like diamonds', as described by certain old men in Mytilini. The 'fairy' (*neraida*) loses her power when someone takes her veil, her kerchief, thereby forcing her to follow that person: 'Should her veil be taken, she is unable to flee.' It is possible to enslave a fairy by snatching a 'small piece' of her garment. The following story told by 76-year-old Stavros Michailaros from Aghia Paraskevi on Lesbos, is typical:

> Once upon a time at a dance, a man grabbed a fairy's cloth without her noticing. When it was time to go she was powerless and had been enslaved to the man who had her cloth. She begged him to return it but he hid it instead. Then the day dawned. They got married and lived together for many years, but they had no children. One day, she found the cloth while searching in the house. She disappeared immediately. The cloth was her power!

The 'cloth' is removed without the fairy noticing it. This removal coincides with the loss of her magic power and is tantamount to her bondage. It is a classic case of *erotic* bondage, which leads to *marriage* (somehow institutionalizing the bond), but not to procreation. The story takes place during the night, which subconsciously symbolizes the time/space for magical practices. With the approach of 'dawn' come the legitimization and authentication of this union, for reasons related to popular concepts about this institution's binding nature. In this particular case, we notice a functional *substitute* for erotic desire which is none other than the *garment* of the desired person. The symbolic act of the substitution of erotic desire (equivalent to bondage) is clear in the phrase: 'Her [the fairy's] power was the cloth!', which is the narrator's final statement. It is evident that the cloth can only *symbolically* substitute for the erotic desire in a homeopathic manner. The spells which 'bind' or 'unmake' love are almost exclusively verbal, although the 'substitution' presupposes a fetish.[13]

Addendum

The subconscious operation of 'substitution' performed by the enchanted garment may, up to a point, explain the function of advertising in the contemporary world. A product's consumption (e.g. the purchase of a very expensive garment) is informally associated with the qualities which the advertiser attaches to it, particularly during the course of a brief advertising spot, where

the garment promoted, a piece of underwear, a perfume, even a car or a brand of margarine or alcoholic drink is directly associated with social status or beauty, a comfortable lifestyle or professional success, indeed often (in a vulgar manner, it might be said) with values, such as family peace or love. Like a contemporary magus, the advertiser anticipates the desired result, knowing in depth the techniques of 'contemporary magic' likely to captivate the buying public, and which totally 'irrational' means will induce them to buy the product. This phenomenon is in turn indissolubly linked with contemporary *myths*; indeed it often turns out to be their creator.

Notes

1 On erogenous mania in particular (*Wahnliebe*) and the mobilization of mania in ancient Greek magic in general, see Petropoulos 1997: 105–7.
2 See above, Ch. 4.
3 A distinction made by Frazer.
4 The sea nymph/goddess Ino Leukothee presents Odysseus with a *κρήδεμνον ἄμβροτον*, that is a magical female headdress. This 'kerchief' functions like the real full-length talismans (bands) which were used in certain ancient rituals and provided protection from drowning.
5 Cf. the interpretation of Euripides' *Helen* 619 given by Seferis in his poem 'Helen'.
6 Medea is descended from Helios and Circe, and she particularly venerates Hekate (*Medea* 395), who is associated with magic from the classical period. See Kottaridou 1991.
7 That is, it 'distorts' or 'warps'. Cf. Soph. *Antigone* 298, 'παραλλάσσει φρένας / χρηστὰς'.
8 Neo-Platonic philosopher, *c.* 245–*c.* 325 CE. He founded his school in his native Syria. He concerned himself, among other things, with the theology and demonology of the Orphics, the ancient Egyptians, the Persians and others.
9 According to Malinowski, the entire magic procedure – that is the 'sayings' together with the symbolic gestures and other acts (τα δρώμενα) – functions as imitations and substitutes for the expected outcome: see Petropoulos 1997: 105.
10 See above, Ch. 12.
11 See Graf 1994.
12 On the inflammation caused by love see Petropoulos 1997: 107–10.
13 A fetish is an object which in certain cultures possesses supernatural powers and consequently is usually regarded with awe.

19

EROTIC AND FERTILITY MAGIC IN THE FOLK CULTURE OF MODERN GREECE

Theodore Paradellis

Erotic and fertility magic forms part of a sum of beliefs, practices and expressions which are based on metaphorical and analogical thought. This totality is ruled by a logic of the tangible and specific and when applied to the symbolic cosmic order, achieves certain concrete results. Erotic magic aims at drawing the love of a certain person, and, in its negative form, at turning love into aversion or rendering all erotic contact impossible. Fertility magic, on the other hand, aims at securing fertility, accelerating conception and overcoming sterility and childlessness.

In order for us to approach this subject, however, we need to place it in the more general ideological and cosmological context of modern Greek folk culture and give at least a schematic picture of the perceptions and representations underlying the concept of fertility and sexuality. Female fertility in the Greek world is perceived and expressed mainly, but not exclusively, through the metaphor of vegetal fertility and reproduction. Indeed it is perceived as a 'domesticated', 'cultivated' vegetal fertility rather than as the fertility of uncontrolled, self-growing 'wild' life. From this standpoint, even when it refers to the 'uncultivated wild nature', this relation is mediated by symbolic or ritual acts, which, in a sense, 'domesticate' this force, controlling and channelling it in a legitimate and moral direction: towards procreation within the marital framework. Conversely, illegitimate sexuality, and particularly that articulated outside marriage, but also between spouses on important religious occasions (e.g. on Sunday, on the feast of the Annunciation), is opposed to fertility, or is associated with an unhealthy form which leads to teratogeny, miscarriage, premature death of the newly born or the infant.[1] This ideological scheme also functions, however, as a self-fulfilling prophecy, since the product of illicit love is born in secret, in wild places. In general, the 'mother of the bastard' is also

held responsible for the hail which destroys vineyards as well as for animal and human illnesses; she is thought, that is, to attract evil.[2]

Wild nature is populated mainly by forces hostile to man, which often approach and lie in wait at all sorts of places of passage (crossroads, cemeteries, windmills, bridges, and so on). And there they must remain apart and far from sanctified man-made and inhabited space. They must also be expelled from there, if they ever approach and cause harm to humans. The incantations and the spells despatch pain, illness, hail and other evils 'to the mountains' or 'to the wild mountains and fruitless trees' or 'to the gorges', or 'to the depths of the sea', 'forty fathoms deep into the earth'. By ostracizing and driving these intrusive, harmful forces into exile, by sending them back where they belong, to their 'place', sacred inhabited space is defined, marked out and protected from any natural, mental or moral insalubrity. On the other hand, since evil 'invades' and since we can expel it, we can also cause it, that is 'summon' it, and this is the intention of every harmful magical act.[3] The cycle of man and nature, of birth and death unfolds within a given and structured universe, where space, time and species are not confused, but are nonetheless associated through symbolic relations (analogical, metaphorical, metonymic, of correspondence and so on). Thus, for instance, in this universe, animals portend human events, plants heal, mountains crack because of men's misfortunes, copulation hampers hunting, menses destroy plants, the weather is revealed through animal behaviour, a blessing expels harmful demons, specific chronological moments influence the transformation of beings and substances, the dead send messages to the living, the saint mediates in human affairs, bodily fluids are influenced by external causes, and so forth.

It is within this universe that the process of conception, birth and humanization takes place, a process which acquires the dimensions of a cosmological drama. The centre of this dramatic scene is occupied by inhabited space, which is surrounded by the outer world, the underworld and the celestial world. This is, nonetheless, a dynamic universe, where benign and evil forces, substances and entities are in continuous motion, affecting, shaping, strengthening or undermining human destiny. Despite the fact that 'giving birth is ruled from above', which refers to the vertical axis of this world, fertility in popular perception is located and sought chiefly on the horizontal axis, which joins nature with culture.

The form of cultivated vegetal fertility is detected everywhere: in love songs, the young woman is named after the names of fruit-bearing trees or fruits – apple, lemon, bitter orange, orange, cherry – or perfumed flowers – rose, jasmine, laurel. Often in songs the maiden appears in a garden or vineyard, inaccessible, while the youth must find a way of approaching her.[4] Fertility symbols abound at the wedding and again concern fruits: apples, pomegranates, walnuts, hazelnuts, currants. The standard of the nuptial procession was made of tree-branches, on which a piece of the wedding cloth or a handkerchief was tied and lemons, pomegranates, apples and other fruit were hung on the branches. Branches of ivy were placed on the nuptial bed while people recited: 'As the ivy

clings to the tree and spreads/so may the bride be joined to the groom and put down roots.' The symbolism of childbirth (especially for a male child) is often quite clear: on the threshold they hang a garland of lemon branches with three lemons arranged so as to be reminiscent of the male genitalia. The fertility symbols we observe at marital ceremonies also appear in other contexts, such as the preparations for sowing: the seeds are mixed with various fruits (including walnuts, apples, almonds) and wheat from the year before, and a pomegranate is placed in the seed-bag, to be eaten after sowing. This pomegranate is occasionally crushed on the ploughshare.

A widespread wedding custom in the Greek world clearly reveals the symbolic link between human and plant fertility: when entering her new dwelling the bride stepped on a ploughshare placed on the threshold. In a variation 'a ploughshare is wrapped with a steelyard in a black cloth, and placed by the door for the bride to step over'. The black cloth, which wards off harm, encapsulates a whole fertilizing act, from its start, the cultivation, the ploughshare, right up to the end, the steelyard, that is the measure used for weighing wheat on the threshing-floor.[5] The steelyard, as the symbol of the fulfilment of a deed, also appears in the case of death, when 'the steelyard is placed by the patient for him to die effortlessly'. In another variation, before the bride enters the house, 'strips are attached to her shoulders to which the bridegroom's oxen are tied and she holds a plough in her hands'. In Lefkada, the childless or those who wanted male children stepped barefoot on two small ploughshares which were kept in the chapel of St John.[6]

Woman is reduced to her reproductive capacity and is occasionally called 'field' ('he has a good field'). The words *sow* and *sowing* are often used of procreation, the verb *giving birth/sowing* is used abusively 'of mutual cooperation of spouses in procreating' ('may she be cursed for sowing/giving birth to you'), the word *seed* denotes the sperm and the child (*my father's seed, Turk's-seed, Devil's-seed*), and conception itself is rendered by the words *catch, catching*, which also refer to plant seeds.[7] Further, the standard answers to children's questions about how they came into the world often refer to the world of vegetation: 'I found you in the vineyard and I took you,' 'I found you in the nettles,' 'you sprang up from the earth like the grass and I took you'.

Thus, in case of childlessness, fertility is sought in the world of nature. The liquid element in its spermatic or fertilizing guise is one of the means used by the 'dried-up' and sterile woman to procreate. Water, a multivalent symbol both in popular representations and in Christian thought, suggests (among other things) the image of a fertilizing, life-giving and creative force. Moreover, according to popular and learned midwifery concepts, a woman's fertility is associated with the womb's humidity. Sources, natural springs, holy waters and the sea are moving waters that are never stagnant ('still water stinks'). Water is occasionally associated metonymically with some miracle-working saint. Particular effectiveness was thus attributed to the first three drops of blessed water on the feast of Epiphany, which the childless couple drank in order to procreate.

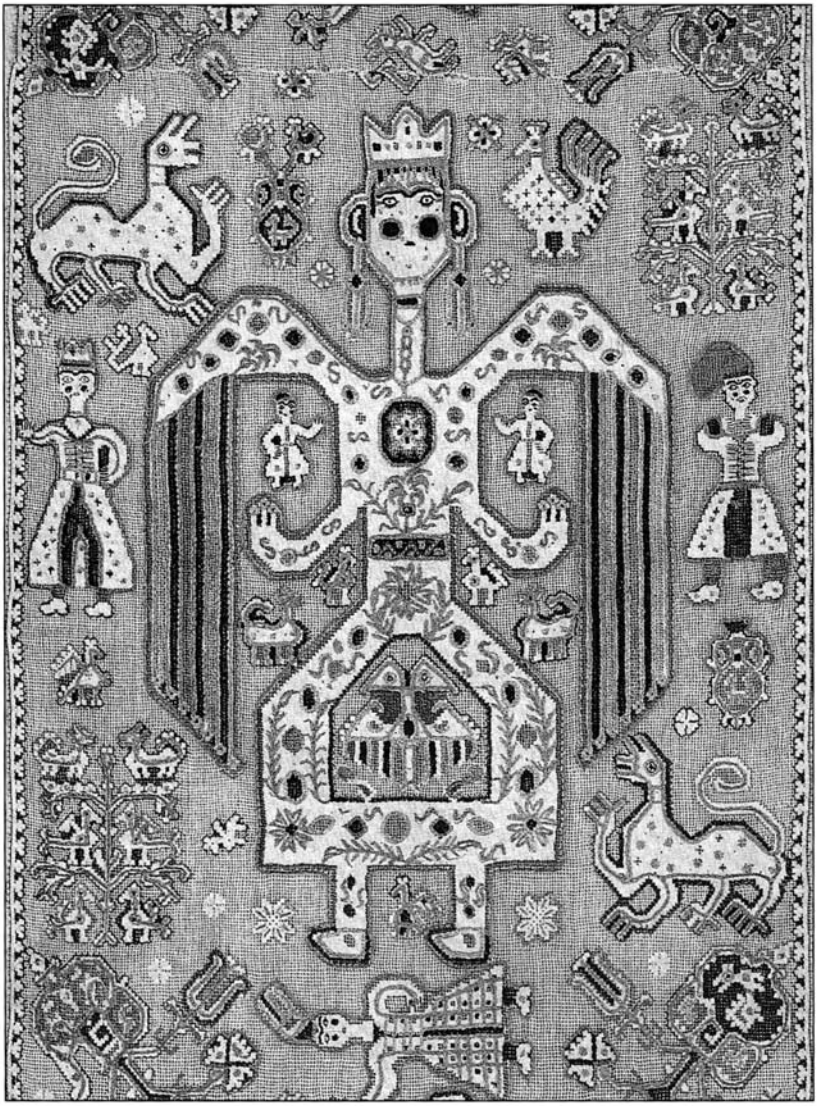

Figure 10 The good fairy (Neraïda) is the guardian of the bridal couple pictured to the right and left. Embroidered bridal pillow from Leucas, 18th century. Benaki Museum, Athens.

A magic ritual act used in various stages of procreation, but also in cases of illness, consists in passing through an opening (*trypoperasma*). One of the ritual's versions involves passage through a fissure in a tree. The childless woman, who has wedges, finds a single tree on the mountain, cuts it open and passes naked through it, and 'then the wedges vanish and the woman procreates'. This 'spatial passage' through the tree's fissure clearly connotes a new birth,

which symbolically annuls childlessness, at the same time representing what is desirable.[8]

Another way of coping with childlessness is to have recourse to *outsiders*, 'the witches who possess famous herbs ... and know of spells and their undoing', or to midwives, 'who are all middle-aged ... when the *heat of life* ... is beginning to cool off'.[9] One of the most widespread magical agents of conception was the onion, which is planted at the full moon and dug up at its waning. The onion with its exterior skins and its similar interior ones – an image which recalls pregnancy – is cooked and the 'heart' placed in the womb. Or, again, the childless woman swallows the powder of three smoke-dried leeches before copulating. The leeches, which are often used to draw blood, to get rid of 'bad blood', here suggest the image of the embryo, which is glued to the womb and feeds on its mother's blood; they consequently suggest the image of conception. The magical act is occasionally accompanied by the refrain: 'As leeches stick to man, so let the child stick to the woman who drinks this, her name being so and so.' This method is also used in the case of pregnancy, when there is danger of miscarriage. A woman also employed a suppository of rennet and the excrement of a hare, a fertility symbol *par excellence*, represented metonymically by a piece of the animal's entrails and a piece which is discarded.[10]

In a world which 'is a tree and we its fruit' the childless woman appeals to nature to 'arouse' her own fertility. Thus, childless women sat on the grass and as it were grazed, actually chewing it with their teeth or crawling on it on 1 May, an ambivalent day of passage, repeating 'Eat grass, cunt.'[11] The same basic logic is served by washing and steaming and smoking, which use exclusively vegetal elements. They

> gather all the flowers of the earth, they boil them and take the water, pour it in a pot on which sits the woman who looks ahead to pregnancy. Immediately afterwards she has to have intercourse with her husband, *because we then have a dilation of the womb*.
>
> (Papamichael 1975: 54; italics added)

Apart from flowers, and particularly the May varieties, other plants are employed, some of which are also used at the wedding: lemon leaves, walnut leaves, chestnuts, orange leaves, apple leaves, bay, rosemary, marjoram, basil, rose petals, mallow, chamomile, and others. Many are used for smoking, washing, for compresses on the underbelly or perineum, 'so the nostril of the womb opens up and a child is begotten'.[12] And as at the wedding, fruits connote fertility. The childless woman, for instance, procreates when she eats a pomegranate from a tree growing in a nunnery and producing one or three fruits (a male and a magical number respectively). In narratives, the eating of an apple or pomegranate offered by a *monk* leads to procreation. Here, fertility is provided by persons who will not make use of their own fertility (nuns, monks).

Female fertility in the Greek world is also conceived through the metaphor of the preparation of bread. In the region of Gortynia, when a new watermill

was being built, 'the women place the childless woman on the millstone and let her revolve until a small quantity of wheat is ground. This flour is kneaded to make a bread offering, which she sends to the priest to celebrate the liturgy in her name.' Here, the whole transformation of the seed (nature) into flour, then into dough through kneading and finally into bread which 'puffs up' in the oven (culture) repeats the act of procreation, which is subsequently sanctified. In an inverse way the so-called *sterile herb*, which is considered to cause sterility for seven years if eaten by a woman, was so potent that when placed on her, it stopped the millstone of the water-mill. According to a similar custom the childless woman eats bread baked in a new oven: through an inversion, the fertile product of the oven enters the mouth of the sterile woman to come out of her womb as a product of human fertility.[13]

In many communities the priests would not accept a bread offering for the service from a childless woman[14] (who was described as *uncommemorated in the liturgy*). The priest refused to accept the special loaf 'because it is reminiscent of Christ, who was taken to church by the Virgin Mary', or, in the formulation of the Church itself, holy bread distributed at the end of the liturgy is sanctified because it was offered to God and in fact bears the stamp of the Theotokos' 'womb'. The refusal also applies in the case of prostitutes and concubines, persons, that is, who 'are attracted by pleasure' and give themselves over to 'carnal love', thus distancing themselves from fertility and the maternal potential of female nature.[15] This refusal has its parallel in the secular sphere: the childless woman does not sow 'so that the *wheat* will not turn sterile', and *yeast* is not accepted from a childless woman. What is more, yeast, the basis of all kneading, is often called a *mother*.[16]

Man, unlike woman, who is held to be absolutely responsible for childlessness, never appears sterile, but 'bound' by magical means, incapacitated, impotent. The danger of being 'bound' lurks during the marriage ceremony, at the moment the priest recites 'Let them be one flesh' or 'the servant of God ... is marrying the servant of God...' The binding is carried out by an enemy, who at the right moment ties one, three or nine knots in a handkerchief, silk thread or hair, or turns a key in a lock saying, 'I tie up the bridegroom.' The binding can also be achieved in various ways from a distance, as when, for instance, a branch of Spanish broom is tied with string and the person casting the spell says, 'I tie and retie the bridegroom.' The binding spell may be meant for the couple or the bride alone. In this case the spell 'locks' the woman, who can no longer receive her husband's seed.[17] For their part the couple defend themselves by taking the necessary precautionary measures. The bride wears her underwear inside out (an inversion of her anatomy), fastens a net around her waist, carries a small pair of scissors in her bodice 'to cut off evil tongues and spells', and the marital crown is made without tying a knot, 'so as not to bind the couple'. Occasionally, the defence against binding spells was undertaken by the bride's mother-in-law, who locked everything that could be locked in the house, unlocking it only after the transitional, liminal and therefore

dangerous moment of the 'crowning of the couple'. The bridegroom performs similar acts: he ties a knot saying, 'I alone tie myself, and alone I shall untie myself.'[18]

Menstrual blood is particularly powerful and is used in erotic magic. It is ambivalent. When the woman 'is in blood' she is considered to be 'defiled'. The small loaf kneaded on that day is not offered in church, for otherwise great harm will occur ('defiled liturgy'). The menstruating woman does not attend church, or receive Holy Communion, and must also not come into contact with wine and salt water, for they turn sour, nor does she come near the vineyard, the beehive and the crops, and she does not milk.[19] Menstrual blood, however, is clearly a fertilizing, therefore positive, element, because it is one of the prerequisites for procreation. Delayed menstruation, 'trapped menses' and the 'white period' cause particular anxiety. Either menstrual blood is associated with the embryo or the latter feeds on it, a notion which is no different from the nineteenth-century medico-philosophical view.[20] But this blood, which also appears at regular intervals beyond the control of the human body, signifies the opposite of procreation, namely non-conception, non-creation of a new life; it signifies, that is, sexuality without maternity, a fundamental distinction of modern folk culture which is reflected in the two models of woman, as Eve and the Virgin Mary. Thus, many herbs thought to be conducive to menstruation are also used for abortions or as aphrodisiacs: rue, parsley, celery, maidenhair and the so-called *killer* or *killer-weed*, 'because it sets the blood in motion'. It is also believed that the woman who suffers great pains during her period does not procreate. These pains, that is, belong to childbirth and not to menstruation, and so their reversal leads to sterility.[21]

The blood of the menses, therefore, becomes dangerous, impure, though not in an absolute sense, but in connection with processes and substances which have an opposite meaning, an opposite cosmological import, and so it must not come into contact with and in relation to them, or at least not without certain ritual prerequisites. Thus, the processes of growth, birth, creation, kneading and transformation must not come into contact with menstrual blood. It is also unthinkable for consecrated bread and Christ's 'blood' to come into contact with a woman during her period, without consequences, for only God can 'join ... the alien and mix the unmixable'.[22] By contrast, women can enter the sanctum after their period, when 'the life-drives begin to wane'.

In particular, the blood of a virgin daughter's first period, which is considered the most potent, is kept by her mother as a magic potion, until she reaches marriage age. Then she gives the potion to the bridegroom whom 'they have caught in their sights', who 'goes mad for her'. Occasionally, hairs from the girl's vulva are browned and pulverized, or the mother slips the maiden's dry navel in powder form into the bridegroom's tobacco. By contrast, men use a 'male drop' (sperm), which they dry in the sun to give to their loved one in a magical potion. Sperm is considered to spring from the spinal chord and to contribute to conception, a view we also find in the Hippocratic tradition. Sexual relations

disrupt men's work and are forbidden on holy days, and sexual excess is thought to cause problems to the spinal chord.

The notions relating to masturbation are also typical; it is a prerequisite of erotic magic, yet is regarded as bringing about the destruction of the 'most valuable bodily fluid', sperm, of which 'a dram ... is worth forty drams of blood, and its potency equals that of forty drams of blood'.[23]

By contrast, magic which causes hate or enmity uses substances that break up or harm: salt, snake's tongue, excrement, water in which a cat and dog have washed, or blood from slaughtered animals. Soil from a recent burial is occasionally used, after it has been 'meditated' on with the words: 'As the dead man forgot the world, so may he/she (name) forget his/her (name),' and placed in the seams of the clothes of the person in love.[24] Here magical practice communicates with a world which is inverted, repugnant, 'exotic', at times when darkness prevails and in unsanctified, often liminal places, and it employs substances which are unclean, defiled, whose taxonomy and moral character are 'out of place', but which are combined with the regularity, holiness and flow of everyday life.[25]

The magic act is based on the creation of a substitute for what one wishes to influence or control; it combines similarity with contact. Similarity, which is always in relation to one or more features of the prototype, but is taken as identity, creates the impression of intelligibility, contact and dominance. The substances employed, such as blood, sperm, pubic hairs, are symbols of the sexual act and of passion but, at the same time, they form part of the act's ontological reality. Furthermore, they materially and specifically embody a relation (which is not, in any event, tangible and visible), a positive or negative feeling for that relation, a sense of lack, but also an intention. This 'simulation' is often combined with corresponding incantations, which are speech acts, performative utterances in an imperative mood, wherein the representation of a thing or situation also signifies its realization. This is a notion and practice deeply rooted in cultural and normative social reality, open to experimentation, something between technique (where cause and effect are mediated by analogical thought), art and poetics, with all this entails from the point of view of imagination, manipulation, resistance or submission of reality to man's desires each time.

And this poetic art-technique is applied in a world in which the human community, religion and nature, though all delineated and hence occupying liminal zones which do not belong to any realm, are dynamically interlinked. Nature, as part of a totality which every individual perhaps views in a different way, is a living nature which joins in and reacts to human affairs, heeding moral and illegitimate commands alike. It is also a practice which, through the particular material dimension of objects, deeds and utterances, gives expression to ideas, emotions, values and relations not actually subject to our senses. From this standpoint they concretize the sense of this abstract reality, and reorganize the personal perspective of the world we experience.

Notes

1 In an article of this length bibliographical references can only be suggestive. Frangaki 1978: 34; Karapatakis 1979: 37, 47.
2 'He fooled me, he seduced me, he took away my honour.../ which mountain shall I climb to, to get out of the childbed, / to have the partridge as midwife and the eagle as servant,' *The Seduced*, Theros 1951: 185, Karapatakis 1979: 36–8.
3 Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1975: 15–40, Politis 1931: 90–4, Stewart 1991: 164–72, Tzavaras 1979.
4 'I entered a garden, where I found my love...', 'he enters a small garden.../ he waters trees and branches.../ he waters small lemon trees,/ he also waters a lemon tree, laden with lemons', 'I enter a garden and I find an apple tree...', Theros 1951: no, 40, 89, 166, 183, Papazafiropoulos 1887: 123, 157, Petropoulos 1954: 33, 37, 39, 77.
5 Special scales (*stateras*, *kandari*), used for relatively heavy weights.
6 The childless woman again, in a well-known and widely diffused song, replies to her complaining husband. 'I gave you a field to sow, to harvest, / but if your oxen are weak, your ploughs broken / and your ploughshare unusable, what do you want from me?' Romaios 1923: 343–53. See also Petropoulos 1954: 77.
7 The concept of a woman as a field to be 'ploughed' by a man and 'planted' by the male seed, which contains the vital force that produces the 'fruit', has a long history in the wider Mediterranean world. Hippocrates, *On a Child's Nature* 22–4, Delaney 1986, Gélis 1984.
8 Megas 1917, Politis 1918.
9 Psychogios 1951: 41, Karapatakis 1979: 84–6.
10 Argenti and Rose 1949: 410, Skouvaras 1967: 79–80.
11 Megas 1952: 18–19, Papamichael 1975: 54.
12 Papamichael 1975: 57–9, Fragaki 1978: 31, Karapatakis 1979: 85, Psychogios 1951: 341, Letsas 1953: 300.
13 Athanasopoulos 1915: 408–9, Megas 1939: 121, Frangaki 1978: 310–32.
14 Konsolas 1966: 228, Athanasopoulos 1915: 48, Rigas 1970: 49, Papamichael 1975: 10, Deuteraios 1979: 19.
15 *Pedalion* 1976; 1800: 408, 681–3.
16 Vonazounta 1963: 522, Karapatakis 1979: 8, Konsolas 1966: 228, Salvanos 1929: 146.
17 Apart from the act of 'locking up', the image of the lock has sexual connotations which are quite clearly expressed; for instance in the riddle: 'I stoop, I kneel before you, my long one in your crack' (lock), Abbott 1903: 367, *Laographia* 1910: II: 354.
18 Megas 1942: 112–13, Koukoules 1926: 450–506, Frangaki 1978: 243, Chaviaras 1891: 213, Psychogios 1989: 43–4, Papazafiropoulos 1887: 49–51, Blum and Blum 1970: 18, 19, 24. A characteristic binding spell for a couple from the Aidipsos region (Euboea) shows its mechanism clearly. The enemy while tying his hands three times in front and three times in the back on the wedding day, utters an incantation, which, inverting the holy ceremony, associates it metonymically with the Devil: '... A devil-priest set off, he took his devil-stole / he took his devil-papers / to go to devil-marry the young couple. / As much as the half-cut snake can get into its hole, so much can he too go to his wife. / As much as a baked leek can pierce a baked tile, / so much can he too pierce his wife's cunt, etc.'
19 Michailidis-Nouaros 1969: 184, Boutouras 1931: 16, Psychogios 1989: 34, 52, Blum and Blum 1965: 33–4, 138, Campbell 1964: 31.
20 'When the Male Seed has entered by the opening below... into the Womb of the woman... and goes through the opening... to her Fallopian tubes... to the Ovary... then these eggs... wetted and warmed, detach themselves from one or two together... and go through these Fallopian tubes... to the Womb... where they stick, sucking the blood of the female menses. These eggs, while feeding there, revitalize and augment the embryo in the Womb of women,' Pyrros 1831: I: 298.

21 Frangaki 1978: 33, and 1969: 51, Pyrros 1831: I: 34 and II: 201, Megas 1941–1942: 167, Agapios Monk 1850: 147, Sarandi-Stamouli 1938: 197–8.
22 Kritikopoulou 1883: 299. The same rationale prescribes that Holy Communion should not be mixed with grapes, as the first is given 'for vitalization and absolution of sins' (soul), while the latter are blessed in a separate prayer 'to thank God who gives such fruits which feed and nourish their bodies' (body), *Pedalion*, Canon, 28: 243.
23 Hippocrates, *Περί γονής* 1 and 2, *Περί οστέων φύσιος* 14–15, Plato, *Timaeus*: 86: το δε σπέρμα ότω πολύ και ρυώδες περί τον μυελόν γίγνεται και καθαπερεί δένδρον πολυκαρπότερον, Frangaki 1969: 33, Psychogios 1989: 34, 45–6, Megas 1941–1942: 110, Diamantopoulos 1916: 625, Kouzis *MEE*, 12: 820 Argenti and Rose 1949: 408–9, Blum and Blum 1965: 115. See also Onians 1951: 182.
24 Frangaki 1978: 33, Psychoyos 1989: 45–6, Megas 1941–1942: 110, Koukoules 1948: 232, 234, Zoirou-Passa 1937: 124–5, Blum and Blum 1970: 22.
25 Douglas 1970; 1966.

Part IV

THE THEORY OF MAGIC

20

INTRODUCTION

The theory of magic

J.C.B. Petropoulos

A dose of theory is not a bad thing. (Even those of us who dismiss theory as applied to archaeology and philology in particular are, ultimately, basing our dismissal on a theoretical assumption.) The authors featured in this final section seek to proceed even further along theoretical lines than those in Part III and to examine a number of general questions concerning Greek and non-Greek magic across history.

Arguably the first individual in Western tradition to hazard a few theoretical, albeit passing, observations on magic was the sophist Gorgias (fifth century BCE) in his rhetorical *jeux d'esprit*, *Helen*: incantations, he noted, belonged to a range of artifices (*technai*) which he subsumed under the heading of *goêteia* ('enchantment'); and *mageia*,[1] spells, he added disparagingly, operated in the domain of falsehood and illusion ('these are errors of the soul/intellect and beguilement of opinion').[2] Around the same time the Hippocratic treatise on epilepsy (*On the Sacred Disease*, 2) drew a fundamental distinction between scientific medicine and the charlatan methods of *magoi*. Plato, like Gorgias, remarked on the ready availability of *mageutikê* (sc. *technê*)[3] – what we might call the technology of magic. Thinkers such as Gorgias and Plato – not to mention Plutarch[4] and Plotinus[5] among many others – looked at magic *from within their indigenous (Greek) culture*. Probably the first to take an outsider's point of view were St Paul and the Early Church. Magic was usually still taken in deadly earnest – the emperor Constantine even officially distinguished between its black and white versions, but now the theoretical terms in which magic and superstition in general were analysed (and roundly condemned) became self-consciously theological and moral: all pagan practices were demonic and evil *tout court*.[6] Needless to say, the Church Fathers had no reason to formulate any finer distinctions between pagan religion and pagan magic.

In the mid-nineteenth century things changed. As Eleonora Skouteri-Didaskalou observes in Chapter 22, social anthropology emerged largely out of the Victorians' 'discovery' of magic and the ensuing investigation of its presumed qualitative differences from religion. (One might say that Sir Arthur Burnett Taylor's and Sir James Frazer's enquiries into magic spawned anthropology, just as Émile Durkheim's analysis of suicide gave rise to sociology.) In

common with Skouteri-Didaskalou, the other four authors in this section engage with some of the key theoretical questions raised by the study of magic especially in the twentieth century:

1 Is the concept of magic itself universal and diachronic? Or is it a late Victorian, middle-class (imperialist) construct?
2 If the distinction between magic and religion is universal or at any rate *useful*, is it a static concept or does it vary over time and across cultures? Is Hippocratic *magiê* essentially the same as the *magia naturalis* of, say, the Italian High Renaissance or 'magic' in Zululand?
3 How, then, do we define magic? Is it inferior religion? Defective reasoning? A parapsychological process? Is it regressive behaviour or, as Alfred Gell argues in Chapter 23, a childlike fantasy which, paradoxically, inspires technological progress? In historical terms, does it represent a 'primitive stage' of human development?
4 How do we analyse magic? As a *symbolic system*? As a performance whose words and actions have distinctive formal traits?
5 What are the main characteristics of the performers of magic, namely the *magos* and the witch? (See the chapters by Stratis Psaltou and Constantinos Mantas.)
6 Given that magic has been considered a technology since the fifth century BCE, will it eventually die out as high technology reaches even greater heights? (See, again, Gell's chapter.)

Richard Gordon well notes in Chapter 21 one of the most serious *practical* obstacles faced by an archaeologist or ancient historian studying the magic of an earlier culture: because his or her subjects are dead and buried, the specialist has no local informants to rely upon. The theoretical essays in this concluding section go some way towards remedying this practical setback. With the help of theory we can achieve critical distance to an extent that allows us to formulate pertinent questions about magic – and religion – in ancient and more recent societies.

Notes

1 *Helen* 10. This is also the first attestation of the term *mageia* in the Greek language: see above, Ch. 1, and Bremmer 1999: 1–12.
2 See also Romilly 1975: 120.
3 Plato, *Statesman* 280e, where he assumes that such *technê* is unreliable.
4 *On Superstition* 164 E f.
5 See Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus* 10, 5–9.
6 See above, Ch. 8 and Ch. 9.

21

TALKING OF MAGIC

Richard Gordon

This section is devoted to the study of magic in general. We might first just take a step back and reflect upon the enterprise itself, *studying magic*. To be in a position to study magic is in itself to stand outside, above, to be a beneficiary, but also in a sense a victim, of the Enlightenment and, ultimately, Christian notion of superstition. Those whose daily lives engage at least potentially with magic generally have no such privilege. Moreover, they often refuse it to the anthropologists who study them. Jeanne Favret-Saada, who studied witchcraft beliefs in the Norman *Bocage* in the early 1970s, soon found that her questions about the topic led others to suspect her of being a witch, with immediate consequences for the success of her enterprise. And when Anthony Buckley tried to study Nigerian magical medicine, he was at first asked to pay £20, £30, £100 – sums far greater than a mere doctoral student could then afford – because it was assumed that he wanted to learn the craft in order to become a practitioner himself. The idea of critical distance in relation to magic is by no means self-evident.

The historian or the archaeologist apparently has things easier: his or her subjects are dead and buried. But the price paid for that advantage is steep: in the absence of knowledgeable living informants, even the most garrulous kind of 'evidence' – written documents – is likely to impose severe limits on the questions we can profitably ask. The best modern studies, Favret-Saada's for example, or Richard Lieban's account of malign magic in the Philippines (*Cebuano Sorcery*, 1967), have relied very largely upon the information and insights provided by indigenous actors, above all practitioners prepared to talk about their art. Artefactual remains impose even more serious restrictions. For the crucial contexts which control their use, value and meaning are absent, and require to be scrupulously, and laboriously, reconstructed from other sources. Nothing can substitute for an intelligent local informant.

Sustaining a magical world

It is now a commonplace to say that what really needs to be explained is not magic but the scepticism of dominant groups in modern societies about the

possibility of magical events or effects. Modern culture has, so to speak, a magic-shaped hole. We may be confronted with it, but – except to modern 'suburban witches' – it means very little to us. Quite different is the position of the person in whose world magic is taken as a realistic possibility. R.F. Fortune, who was a pupil of the British functionalist anthropologist[1] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and wrote the first anthropological account of magical practice based upon his own fieldwork (*Sorcerers of Dobu*, 1932), recounts an instructive story from Dobu, one of the D'Entrecasteaux islands off the coast of eastern Papua. An informant told him how he had witnessed a *vada* sorcerer killing a man who had insulted him. The sorcerer crept up on the man, who was working in his garden, and suddenly burst out upon him, screaming. The victim fell writhing to the ground.

> The sorcerer feinted to rap his victim gently over the body with his lime spatula. The body lay still. He cut open the body with the charmed spatula, removed entrails, heart and lungs, and tapped the body again with the spatula, restoring its appearance to apparent wholeness [...]. The sorcerer's attentions here left the body of the victim, and transferred to charming the lime spatula anew. The body rose [...]. The man went to the village, and arrived raving ... [he] lay down writhing, groaning and calling on his abstracted vital parts by name – by this time it was mid-day [...]. Next day the sun climbed to its zenith and he lay dead.

A classicist will at once recall an episode in Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses*, written *c.* 160 CE, in which a man named Socrates is punished by his witch-mistress by having his heart wrested out of his living body, the wound then being staunched magically by a(n invisible) sponge. Next day, Socrates seems a little off-colour, but with his friend carries on with his journey until they come to a river. Just as Socrates is leaning forward to drink from the stream, 'the wound in his throat gaped open with a deep hole and the sponge suddenly rolled out of it, accompanied by just a trickle of blood' (*Met.* 1, 11–19). He falls down dead.

These narratives, separated by nearly 1,800 years, represent virtually the same belief about the powers of the sorcerer or witch. But their context, and therefore their meaning, are very different. Fortune's Dobuan informant made no distinction between two types of awareness, between what he saw (supposing indeed he actually *saw* any of this scenario) and what he knew. Everyone on Dobu knows, or once knew, that *vada* sorcery consists precisely in an attack upon the victim's innards, just as everyone would have an idea of what such an attack would be like. This cultural knowledge supplied the meaning of the passes made with the spatula over the body: the informant did not see the sorcerer removing the innards, but he 'knew' that was what he was doing. The meaning of the sorcerer's gestures passes directly into the narrative as an observed sequence of events. An informant is not a witness in a court of law. The sorcerer too had learned his part, by consuming gallons of salt water to keep him from swallowing his own black spells with his saliva, and chewing heaps of ginger and *gau* to

increase his body heat so that he could kill more effectively. Perhaps even more important, the victim also knew what the sorcerer was doing, and obligingly – indeed, being without his innards, quite naturally – died, piteously lamenting his loss. All three participants in the drama, sorcerer, victim and witness, knew how to perform their roles in (re-)creating a magical event. The wider context of Dobuan belief enabled them to occupy these roles fully.

Apuleius' narrative is a literary construct, indeed presented as an ironical, secondary narrative within the primary, episodic one. Even Apuleius, though his context does not allow him to endorse the witchcraft narrative without reservation, gives us to understand that, with magic, one never knows where one is. In a magical world, the rules are, at any rate, quite simply different.

The case of this late antique author makes the point that a culture committed to the possibility of magic can tolerate a good deal of distancing and scepticism about it. It may also produce more or less elaborate rational accounts of how it might work. The Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus (205–269/70 CE), for example, suggested that magical incantation was effective at a distance, i.e. even when the victim or client was not physically present, because it was able to tap into the World-Soul, the higher Mind that links all life together: 'a word spoken quietly acts on what is far off and makes something separated by an enormous distance listen' (*Enneads* 4,9,3, 4–9). Magic is naturalized by being assimilated into integral elements of the Neo-Platonist cosmology. The very existence of such an explanation underwrites the general proposition that incantation is effective. Plotinus also developed an account that reconciled his Platonic psychology[2] with the experience of being attacked by an opponent's malign magic. Some philosophers claimed to be immune to magical attack, because, unlike the uneducated poor, they were careful to lead a healthy life. But Plotinus had experienced strange spasmodic pains in his insides. The explanation he preferred was that he had been 'caught' by one of his rivals, Olympius of Alexandria. That meant that he had to find a more sophisticated explanation than the one that claimed all philosophers were immune to magical attack. The thought he came up with is that, although the rational part of the soul cannot be affected by malign magic, the irrational parts might be. The physical pains he felt must have been the consequence of incantations entering his body through his appetitive soul. Why did he not die? Because his soul, as a whole, was powerful enough to beat back the force of the attacks, indeed to turn them back upon the aggressor, who was therefore compelled to desist (*Enneads* 4,4,43; Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 10, 5–9).

All of this is simply another way of making a point made by E.E. Evans-Pritchard, another British anthropologist, at Oxford, in his study of witchcraft among the Zande people, who live, or used to live, along the Nile–Congo divide in the Southern Sudan (*Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, 1937). He showed that, given some elementary premises – for example that harm can be caused by 'mystical' agencies, and that ill-luck takes the form of a person wishing one ill – the rest of the complex world of magic follows quite logically. The premises are constantly reinforced by experience: the fact of illness shows

that witches are active; the identity of the witches is indicated by oracles; when a counter-spell is laid, somebody dies in the locality; the oracle confirms that he was the witch. All these claims are protected by a range of secondary beliefs or rationalizations. For example, it may be pointed out that, when questioned on the same matter at different times, the *benge* oracle gives contradictory answers. Aha, say the Zande, that only shows that the oracle is sometimes interfered with by another power. The notion of a hierarchy of oracles may also be invoked here: the sort of low-powered oracle consulted by women and children can be expected to give inferior, i.e. less accurate, 'wrong', answers as compared with those given by important oracles patronized by men.

Probably the most-studied 'native' magician in the world is a man named Laduma Madela, a 'lightning magician' from Zululand in South Africa. He was born *c.* 1908, and at least in 1993 was still alive, though very old, infirm and partly blind. His father was an itinerant healer, who used a traditional method of divining, by scattering bones, to diagnose illnesses. Laduma was his medicine-carrier, and also his pupil. Laduma earned his living for many years as a smith, but his real interest lay in healing and magic, and in due course he became a perfect example of a 'primitive intellectual'. He had learned to read and write from his father, and in the 1930s joined a Zulu Wesleyan sect. In the years after a vision of the creator-god Mvelinqangis in 1951, he wrote an enormous 'Bantu-Bible', a personal account of his conception of the world, whose printed version extends to 440 pages, not counting hundreds of annotated drawings, which are representations of the visions he has received. This work brought him to the attention of a German ethnologist, Katesa Schlosser, with whose encouragement Madela expounded not merely his observations of nature and animals, and his methods of healing and sorcery, but also the workings of his 'medicines'. Even in a compressed form rendered suitable for publication, this additional material fills three large books. Much of this lore is undoubtedly traditional, but Madela has made the effort to combine traditional, partly collective or general knowledge, with his own private vision of the world. To an outsider, his hut looks like a dark, untidy attic stuffed with an Augean medley of extraordinary objects; but to him every object in it has its own history, meaning, properties and value. It would be right to suspect that without the support and interest of the prestigious foreign outsiders, to say nothing of the residual stimulus of his knowledge of Christianity, Madela would probably not have been so ambitious – without a receptive, and generous, audience, there would have been no point in transferring his visions to paper, for example, or recording his animal-lore, his conceptions of the physical and 'mystical' body, or his views of the different departments of magical practice. And we cannot assume that all, or even very many, magical practitioners are as learned and intelligent as he – though we would do well to recall Marcel Mauss' observation that it is not a society's incompetents who are called to be its magicians.[3] Nevertheless, Madela's project is paradigmatic for magical practice in its self-consciousness, and in its determination *to root power in knowledge*. The magician is always aware of the image(s) of the

'magician' in his or her own society, and of the numerous stories concerning them. To a significant degree he or she models his or her own role and self-understanding on them.

Magical beliefs are not mere items, therefore, which can easily be singled out and examined in and for themselves, as they generally are in books dealing with local folklore. They are arranged in an inextricable way with all the other propositions that a culture, and in particular the practitioner, entertains about the world. They are frequently difficult, indeed impossible, to understand without an enormous background knowledge, which often even the anthropological 'expert' on a given area does not possess. What can be the sigificance of these shrivelled, dried, often rebarbative-looking 'medicines' that litter a magician's hut? Yet as societies become more complex, and individuals' experience becomes systematically and continuously different in relation to class, wealth and relative power, wide differences may also open up in the degree of acceptance of such beliefs, and indeed in their very nature. The elite of Late Republican Rome had access, for example, to a Hellenistic Greek model which suggested that only those on the margins – above all, old countrywomen and foolish children – believed in the possibility of magic, and told stories about it. One day such beliefs will die away: time is on the side of scepticism, for it 'obliterates falsehoods of common belief' (Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2, 5).

The Augustan poets also sometimes toyed alternately with belief in and with scepticism about magic. Horace, for example, imagines a story told by an old wooden statue of Priapus, up on the Esquiline Hill, now a smart suburb, but formerly the site of mass-graves of the poor, where witches used to scavenge for their bits of mouldering flesh and bones, to perform necromancy and goodness knows what else. One day, he boasts, he made a fart, and the old biddies went scuttling back home in fright, scattering their false teeth and wigs (*Sat.* 1, 8). Here the familiar Mediterranean ithyphallus performs its traditional duty of protecting us against evil. But other poems by the same poet are a good deal less confident that all this is a thing of the past. In one poem, for example, Horace imagines the pleas of a little boy who has been carried off to play the part of the sacrificial victim in a necromantic ritual (*Epod.* 1, 5). The same Cicero who laughed at silly old women could claim, in a judicial speech against a pro-praetorian governor, that the accused had regularly murdered boys to enable him to perform necromancy (*In Vat.* 14). And an inscription from Rome laments the fate of a 4-year-old slave belonging to Livia Iulia, the sister of Germanicus and the future emperor Claudius (reigned 41–54 CE), who was carried off 'by the cruel hands of a witch (*saga*)', and killed by her (*ILS* 8522). Again the Elder Pliny, a senior member of the equestrian order, observed some years later, in the third quarter of the first century CE: 'No one is unafraid of being "caught" by curses' (*Hist. Nat.* 28, 19). All this suggests, once again, how *unusual* our own post-Enlightenment scepticism, or rather indifference, is.

Theorizing magic

The earliest anthropological theories were based upon the evolutionist premise that magic belongs to a more primitive level or stage of human thought than religion. It was thus made peculiar in failing to adapt, turned into a living fossil, a coelacanth of the mind. Its typical habitat was to be found among remote tribes, which evolution and progress had overlooked. But – oddly enough – there were pockets of such primitive thinking even in the working class in England, and in the vogue for American spiritualism that had been gathering since its 'invention' in 1848. E.B. Tylor, in *Primitive Culture* (1871, 1891), saw magic as based on a mistaken realist application of the universal human ability to perceive associations, especially analogy and similarity: these connections are actually 'ideal', but the believer in magic insists on *mistaking* them as 'real'. He or she infers an objective, albeit 'mystical', link from a perceived analogy. Tylor here succeeded in distancing magic from the occult – an important achievement – at the cost of psychologizing it. J.G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890, 1922) picked up the point about analogy and turned it into the basis of two universal 'Laws of sympathy', homoeopathic magic and contagious magic, based on the Law of similarity and the Law of contact respectively. Indeed, the two principles are actually for him the basis of the working of the human mind: *magic is correct reasoning based upon false premises.* Insofar as magic continues to exist in a world dominated by more rational intellectual modes, it does so as a survival from an outmoded stage of mental evolution, the inability (rather than the temporary refusal) to distinguish between preception and conception. Evolutionism and psychological realism likewise supported the philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's distinction in *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910, 1912) between pre-logical and 'scientific' mentalities: the believer is trapped inside his magico-religious world, and it is only the development of complex social organization and above all literacy and numeracy which, by making possible and institutionalizing more differentiated psychological representations, permits escape from it.

It is characteristic of all these older views that the problem of magic was located primarily in the individual's mind: there were occlusions and compulsions which prevented 'natives' or 'primitives' from thinking straight. This claim underlies the still widespread tendency to 'explain' a magical ritual by revealing the (erroneous) psychological processes that it is supposedly based on. There were, moreover, two very important background factors which encouraged this view of the nature of magic and what it is to explain it. First, almost all the material available to early anthropological theorists was derived from reports by missionaries, travellers, colonial servants and other privileged foreigners, whose understanding of the 'natives' and their practices was often quite rudimentary, and normally tinged with varying degrees of disgust and condemnation. They therefore tended to take note of what they thought they could recognize, a selection inevitably based upon the residual categories of their own culture. The very

process of 'noting' was also a selection and interpretation of what they actually saw. There certainly are some exceptions to this, such as the outstanding work of W.W. Skeat in Malaya (*Malay Magic*, 1889), but in general the knowledge of magical practice available to the early armchair anthropologists left a great deal to be desired. Second, the classical tradition with which early anthropologists were familiar had already provided a model for the *decontextualization* of magical practice. The 'medical' books of Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* (particularly Books 24–30) virtually never refer to the full rituals used by 'root-cutters' and other magical healers. In keeping with the conventions of the Hippocratic and later medical writers, the properties of plants and animal parts are treated naturalistically. Occasionally indeed the rules for collection are mentioned, as in the case of *Peucedanum* (identified as sulphur-wort): 'The [roots] are cut up with bone knives into strips four fingers long and pour out their juices in the shade, the cutters first rubbing their head and nostrils with rose oil lest they should feel dizzy' (25, 117f.). But the preparations themselves are treated as medical simples, removed from their embeddedness in the praxis of individuals working within a tradition.

One of the most penetrating criticisms of Lévy-Bruhl's use of arguments based on the primitives' ignorance of the law of non-contradiction is that the contradictions they are alleged to have tolerated are generally quite illusory, the consequence of *observers'* misunderstanding and misreporting: the double distance between theorist and reality made it all too easy to disregard, even to be totally unaware of, the fact that beliefs are specific to a particular context. But it was the penetration of sociology into anthropology that most effectively undermined the plausibility of the early psychological views of magic. First, Emile Durkheim argued in *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912) that sympathetic magic, for example, was merely an element or aspect of magical rituals. One has rather to examine the *purpose* of the ritual as a whole. Its effectiveness is a function not of its logic but of the *collective representations* which inspire it. This view broke decisively with one of the main evolutionist presuppositions, the contrast between magic and religion, which was simply a thinly disguised tenet of Christianity in its struggle against the pagan beliefs of the Roman Empire. Consequently, Durkheimian magic looks very much like Durkheimian religion: the cure has killed the patient. Marcel Mauss, in what is still an excellent overview of a whole range of problems connected with magic ('Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', 1902–1903), tried to retain the traditional notion of the magician as anti-religious and anti-social as well as remain faithful to the general Durkheimian project; and succeeded only in tying himself in knots ('une difficulté grave', 'un dilemme').

The most important innovation came, however, from the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who, in several works on the Trobriand islanders, above all *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (1935), laid emphasis upon the *performanc*e and especially the *language of magic*. Malinowski's descriptions of garden-magic ceremonies, interspersed as they are with a commentary upon the

complex symbolic relationships between acts and substances in the magical realm and in the realm of the everyday, demonstrate the *importance of context* in the construction of meaning in such rituals. Close examination of the sequence of rituals directed towards a given end showed that there need be no appeal to a special form of thinking. Moreover, although the Trobrianders made a distinction between ordinary speech and magical language, he was able to show that the

> weirdness consists very largely in artificial form, in the ungrammatical use of certain roots, in reduplications or couplings, in mythological references and concrete topographical allusions ... the coefficient of intelligibility is found in the fact that even the strangest verbal formations refer directly or indirectly to the matter with which the magic deals.
>
> (2: 230)

The effect of Malinowski's work, which remains exemplary in its detail and precision, was to direct attention finally away from the narrow issue of the practical intention of the magical rite and towards the question of the appropriate contexts for understanding the social meaning of such rituals. In effect, he introduced the notion of magical action as *symbolic action*.

Magic in action

The effects of this liberation were quickly felt. Although there has not been much in the way of highly detailed analyses of magical ceremonies – the world in which these were still observable was rapidly shrinking even in Malinowski's day – the notion that magical action should be understood as symbolic was taken up in other ways. One of the main consequences was that anthropologists began to look at the roles of magic in daily life. Once again, the dominant theoretical account of magic ensured the discovery of the *empirical* materials it required. For contingent reasons, which had much to do with the domination of the field by the structural-functionalism of Radcliffe-Brown, and the role of Evans-Pritchard at Oxford, many chose to look at the most prominent aspect of magical beliefs, witchcraft and sorcery.[4] They examined the variable incidence of witchcraft the world over, the structural tensions in society as revealed by patterns of accusations, the type of people accused, sexual roles, fears and violence, accusations as interpretations of misfortune, the role of the evil eye as a form of social control. This seminal work, almost all of which appeared in the form of articles, was brought together in three collections that appeared in, or belong to, the 1960s, J. Middleton and E.H. Winter's *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (1963), M. Marwick's *Witchcraft and Sorcery* and M. Douglas' *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (both 1970). It was already apparent in the two latter books that European social historians had begun to discover the value of anthropological findings in opening up the roles of witchcraft, and especially

the functions of accusations, in the wider context of the late medieval and early modern witch-hunts. Since the pioneeering work of Keith Thomas (*Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1971) and his pupil Alan MacFarlane (*Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 1970) on English witchcraft, there has been a massive re-evaluation of Continental archival material relating to the persecution of witches, a re-evaluation which can now conveniently be followed in the *Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* now in the course of publication.

The only ancient historian to have followed these trends very closely was Peter Brown, who contributed to Mary Douglas' collection what is still one of the best articles on accusations of magic at court in the fourth century CE. Given the general paucity of information about ancient Greek magic, one of the most promising lines of approach is to try to use the curse tablets, especially those from Classical Athens, as evidence for the social roles of malign magic, the place of the law-court in pursuing and perpetuating feuds, the symbolic value of the curse and the ways in which the tablets seek to acquire authority. Some work has been done here by C. Faraone (1985, 1989, 1991), and by D. Ogden (1999), but a great deal more is required. And some scepticism is called for: is it of any explanatory value, for example, to invoke the 'agonal' features of Greek social life in trying to explain the curse tablets? But we also need to return to Malinowski's other preoccupation, his emphasis upon the linguistic features – phonetic, semantic, rhetorical – of magical language, if we are to escape from easy assumptions about the meaning and value of such texts, given that we have no hope of examining in detail the construction of magical rituals. I have myself tried to make a start here (Gordon 1999) by looking more closely at the roles of lists and listing in the tablets. The issue of the special nature of magical language has become topical once again since Stanley Tambiah's attempt to redefine it as *performative*,[5] as aiming to transfer properties by way of *metonymy* and *metaphor*. Beyond language again, Ariel Glucklich (1997) has urged that we need to develop a taxonomy of physical acts within magical rituals, tasting, pointing, beating, stepping, inhaling, blowing: 'the events of the rite are more important than its symbols' in establishing its meaning as a whole. We are compelled, at any rate up to a point, to fit the questions we can profitably ask to the materials at hand; but *we can also make use of theoretical discussions to alter our horizon of enquiry*, to read the texts differently.

On the other hand, the sociology of accusations and witchcraft is only a corner of the field, even though it is the anthropological legacy which is most familiar outside that discipline.

We can also use the notion of magical action as symbolic to examine the social sites of magic more closely. Why does it occur so insistently in certain areas of social life – in the context of sexual relations, legal conflicts, high-risk enterprises such as gambling, craft production? Where are we to place 'magical healing'? What kind of people are or become magicians? Is there a hierarchy of roles and capacities? The materials of archaeology can lead directly to engagement with wider questions of social structure and history. What can a close

reading of these texts contribute to an understanding of the larger structures within which they are merely incidents? What types of imagery are used? What is their role, and how does imagery contribute to the force of the curse? What is the value of writing in magic?

One of the most obvious advantages of the symbolic view of magic is that it allows the contrast between religion and magic to fade into the background. A modern Greek who thinks about magic will probably think first of divination, with the lees of coffee-cups, or the cards, which is mildly censured by Orthodox belief. After that, of sorcery. Prominent among the images of sorcery in modern Greece are the ideas that sorcery is a matter of reciting certain spells and performing certain ritual actions in precisely the correct manner – an example of extreme ritual fixation. Another widely known feature of sorcery is the guilt it is supposed to inspire in those who appeal to it or seek to use it. Sorcery is in fact conceptually the extreme opposite of one's normal religious and social duty, the ultimate form of seeking *private advantage* at the expense of others.

Such views are what one expects within a Christian dispensation and cosmology. In the ancient world things were much more complex, since evil was conceptually also the responsibility of the same gods who upheld the social order and the usual theodicy of good fortune. Magic, even malign magic, could not so easily be separated from 'religion'. Although the term *μαγεία* entered the language around 600 BCE, its semantic field only partly overlapped with the modern European notion of 'magic'. Its meaning was in fact much more similar to our use of 'magic' in relation to some performer such as David Copperfield, or the German duo with the white tigers, Siegfried Fischbacher and Roy Uwe Horn, who mystify for gain and pleasure, but in truth effect nothing. It was not until the Hellenistic period that *μαγεία* acquired substantially more of the modern meaning, when there emerged the notion of natural magic, in the 'Magian' writings, and the traditional female witch-figure, a Circe or a Medea, gave way in favour of a male stereotype, the learned magician. But even so, no agreed 'ancient view' of magic emerged until the Christian empire: so long as the ancient world remained pagan, the notion of illicit religious power rubbed shoulders uneasily with a positive conception of the *μάγος* as a holy priest, magical healing had to be set against sorcery, the threat of the mighty magician was forced to compete with the thought that there really was nothing in magic at all, that it was all the merest vanity.

The Greeks, in other words, were as much at a loss to define magic as we are. But unlike us, they viewed it *from within*. Even the modern follower of the *wicca*-cult cannot scramble back inside the bell-jar of belief. For magic to be true, you need more than a sect, you need a cosmos in which the Other World is in constant invisible traffic with Here and Now, and you need access to a language, real or figurative, which can affect that traffic. Without those preconditions, one is simply playing make-believe.

Notes

1 See below, Ch. 22.
2 Mainly in his *Republic* (4.435–42, 9.580d, etc.), Plato envisaged a tripartite division of the soul into the rational, the passionate and the appetitive.
3 For Mauss' views see also below, Ch. 24.
4 The author is referring to the anthropological distinction formulated by Evans-Pritchard between two types of destructive ('black') magic. Witchcraft is often (but not always) practised by women, and is attributable to certain innate, occult qualities of the witch, who as a rule is a perverse individual. Sorcery is practised by anyone, male or female, since it does not presuppose special mental or spititual traits. The sorcerer need only secure the required magical substances (especially in Africa) or recite the obligatory incantations (in Oceania). See also below, Ch. 22.
5 For Tambiah see below, Ch. 22.

22

MAGIC AS A POINT OF REFERENCE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY*

Eleonora Skouteri-Didaskalou

In great measure, 'magic', mysterious, vague and ambiguous, owes its power and permanence precisely to the fact that it cannot be defined. If defined, it ceases to be what we wish to investigate. In other words, it is an indeterminate and marginal subject which has the protean ability to adjust to contingencies and to change form, always preserving, however, its fundamental characteristic: its marginality. Despite its marginal nature, which was always its fixed point, 'magic' was and continues to be part of our life, both literally and as a metaphor. In spite of its marginal position in society, indeed perhaps because of it, 'magic', both as a way of thinking and as practical behaviour, was and remains a subject which cuts across various fields of everyday speech. Through it various social behaviours are also expressed, individually or in groups; from the most mysterious rituals to the more mundane constancies, habits and practices connected with prayers and curses, prejudices and superstitions, horoscopes and predictions, cups and cards.

Marginality is distinct to 'magic' and adds to it the fascination of the unknown and the exotic, the self-delusion of having access to, or expecting the intervention of, supernatural sources of – and the illusion of power over – forces which determine human matters from afar and beyond. 'Magic' belongs simultaneously to the domain of the forbidden and uncontrollable, its distinguishing features being diachronic across cultures. For this reason it has become an object of dominant official parlance and institutionalized practices.

It is therefore difficult to conceive that 'magic' is an issue which engages anthropology exclusively. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that 'magic' is a priority among anthropologists. Anthropology (in all its academic and epistemological versions, its variants bearing general or specialized names and titles: anthropology, social anthropology, cultural anthropology, ethnology, ethnography, even folklore) took pains to confirm, secure and reproduce this priority,

occasionally to such an extent that it ran the risk of losing its scientific or philosophical nature and becoming a *science of the magical*. 'Magic', at any rate, was the testing ground for anthropology and at the same time an anthropological field, since – according to at least one version of the history of this particular social science – 'magic' constituted its chief object. Magical practices, prejudices and superstitions, symbolisms and rituals were considered expressions of a particular type of thought and behaviour which covered whatever was left behind by the evolution of the modern, rational and individualized way of thinking: 'remnants', the 'irrational', the 'erratic' and the 'inexplicable', that is everything characterized by an adherence to anonymous mass tradition and an associative way of interpreting the world; all that falls under the rubric of Lévy-Bruhl's *pre-rational thought*,[1] or the way of thinking of the *primitive* or the *primitives* or the *traditionalists* or the *common* or *uneducated* people, or of *others* in general, according to the respective definitions which have decisively affected the nature of anthropology and folklore in their European course. Quite simply, the primitive or traditionalist or popular domain (culture, society, way of life, way of thinking) was thought to be distinguished by superstitions and prejudices, conservatism and passivity; that a *vis a tergo* (regressive force) held thought and behaviour captive, preventing their progress. According to this basically rationalist perception, 'magic' is the most characteristic example of a particular way of thinking which operates in the realm of the *belief of the many* rather than in that of the *truth of the few*. The few are propelled by a *vis a fronte* (progressive force) towards the liberation of thought, by means of rational *logos* and education, towards progress and evolution, which cancel the illogical, irrational and pre-logical. Anthropology, at any rate (and up to a point ethnography too, for its own reasons), undertook by definition and priority to study this *different* field. Led by a perception which considered the other as *different*, it further defined it as *unlike*, from a diachronic but also from a synchronic or inter-cultural viewpoint. The definition of *different* often simply brings out the *strange*. In this particular course of anthropology the subject of 'magic' was always a *fixed point of reference*. For over a century, anthropology was suspended over the abyss of the meanings of 'magic', caught in the quagmire of its uses, its spells, its incantations and pretences.

The deeper causes of sociological, historical and epistemological speculation focusing on the study not only of 'magic', but also of mentality and perceptions, culture and the collective conscience, and of course the social phenomenon itself, must be sought in the milieu of the *Année Sociologique* and the circle of scholars around Emile Durkheim[2] in the early twentieth century. The history of the anthropological approaches to 'magic' must always reckon with this *landmark*. Only then is it possible to arrive at a systematic definition of the specific subject that allows us to see and analyse the *pre* and *ante* situations. Before the sociological theory of 'magic', the theory of evolution was dominant, E.B. Tylor being its earliest and most systematic exponent, and J.G. Frazer its latest and most prominent. Subsequently, the functional method of approaching 'magic' made its appearance (with the systematic analyses of Bronislaw Malinowski, the father of

ethnography); the historical-empirical approach (with Clyde Kluckhohn's characteristic work);[3] and the structural approach of E.E. Evans-Pritchard. More recently we have the neo-functional analyses of the Manchester School, the structural analysis of C. Lévi-Strauss, semiotic approaches and historical analyses, which assisted and were assisted in turn by the change in perspective in the field of historical anthropology and anthropological history.[4] There are, in addition, the postmodern attempts to analyse 'magic' in a deconstructive way.[5] We should not be confused by the numerous names of methods and theories, nor by the names of a multitude of scholars; despite their significance, most are usually known only to anthropologists and historians. Of course, the sociological view of 'magic' and the chain reactions it caused in anthropological theory and practice did not in the least affect the situation outside anthropology. As a result, the evolutionary theories of 'magic' influenced anthropologists for about a century. These theories continue to influence specialists in related scientific and academic fields (e.g. folklore,[6] philology, archaeology, religious studies, etc.), providing tools both for the analysis of separate cases of 'magic' and for the overall view and interpretation of the ancient world and traditional society.

At any event, the view formulated by M. Mauss[7] and Henri Hubert in their short study *Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie* (1902–1903) provided later anthropologists with a new 'key' for defining and studying the subject of 'magic'. In this sense the *Outline of a General Theory of Magic* laid the groundwork for the subsequent approaches of anthropologists (or at least the more inquisitive among them) to 'magic': it proved that 'magic', just like other 'things' which appear as *things* (mysterious/ready for interpretation – or accessible and familiar – ready for consumption or exploitation), are in reality relations, indeed *social relations*, that is relations of *power*. Relations, and not the epiphenomenon of an idealistic or ideological process of world knowledge, as was claimed until then. In other words: the result of social processes which settle the past and predetermine the future, fashioning the social realities of the present.

With the exception, however, of certain fundamental anthropological theories of 'magic' which were formulated in subsequent years, the *Outline* was forgotten. It returned to the fore only in 1950, with the publication of the abridged new edition of Mauss' basic studies (*Sociologie et Anthropologie*), with an extensive introduction by C. Lévi-Strauss, and, after the publication of a set of English translations of the circle of the *Année Sociologique* under the overall direction and encouragement of R. Needham and the so-called Oxford School.[8] The *Outline*, that is, resurfaced only after the rediscovery of the *Année* by structuralism and neo-structuralism.[9] At any rate, the most recent – as far as I know – approaches to 'magic' essentially reinstate all the questions tackled by the *Outline*. From this point of view, the fundamental positions which had been formulated there, over a century ago, can serve even today as points of reference for an anthropological theory of 'magic', which however has yet to be formulated.

In any case, 'the genealogy of anthropologists who for twelve entire decades were involved with the issue of distinguishing between magic, religion and

science forms a long chain, a set of worry-beads'. This formulation, which summarizes a particular interpretation of the continuities and discontinuities of the (mainly British) anthropological theory of 'magic', and at the same time expresses a concrete anthropological epistemological perception, is to be found in S.J. Tambiah's *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (1990).[10] The book is one of the most recent examinations of the history of 'magic'. According to Tambiah, anthropological theories of 'magic' can be distinguished as follows: (a) in the first stage (that is from the early nineteenth century up to the First World War) the Victorian and post-Victorian views, formulated by E.B. Tylor and Sir James Frazer respectively; (b) in the inter-war period, when anthropology becomes institutionalized as a science (either as ethnology or more particularly as social and cultural anthropology), the operational analysis of functionalism and structural functionalism, based on the ethnographic location of the subject, with relatively little theoretical development and generalization, and emphasizing individualism, mentalism and pragmatism; and (c) shortly before the Second World War, the fundamental study *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, by E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1937), which has since become the textbook of ethnographic anthropologists.

It would be useful to refer briefly to the main points of certain of these anthropological theories and views of 'magic'. First it must be stressed again that no theory can be constructed *in vitro*, outside social contexts and historical contingencies; far less an anthropological theory, particularly an anthropological theory of thought, perceptions, beliefs, ideology, faith, religion and 'magic'. The analytical anthropological approach to such issues is structured and has as its reference axis the conjunction of three related systems of interpretation of social phenomena: the *ancient Greek*, the *Judaic* and the *Christian*. Each of these systems of thought is complex by itself. The ancient Greek, and generally the Graeco-Roman or Mediterranean system of thought, if expanded in time and space, comprises perceptions characterizing the civilizations of the Mediterranean basin and its northern, eastern and southern hinterlands (e.g. AssyroBabylonian, Sumerian and Hittite civilizations, Egyptian, North African, Persian, ancient Greek, Graeco-Roman, and others). The Judaic interpretative system, despite its particularity, is part of the Mediterranean world, and the Christian system (in its numerous versions) is structured in connection with, by contrast to and in conflict with, pre-existing interpretative systems. Even though the European world seems to have changed much in the course of so many centuries, the dominant ideology, and indeed its more institutionalized and everyday reflections, have not changed as easily. As these belong rather to the domain of *la longue durée*: where ideology follows its particular, delayed rhythm, they can determine the historicity of social relations and situations. They are able, if need be, to put to new use the same old dominant interpretative models and stereotypes, and of course the same old perceptions.

The world of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, in the context of which the basic anthropological theories of 'magic' emerged and

evolved, was unambiguous. It bore absolutely no relation either to the investigation of the 'ancient world' or to that of subsequent historical periods and developments. The 'ancient world', 'other cultures' and 'history' were used merely as a measure to judge and assess progress, and not to be studied per se. The world which used history in such a way was the world of History and Culture in its most evolved form, namely (West) European; it was the world of Progress and Rationalism, which approached other cultures as radically different (and hence outside history and beyond any comparison with 'civilization', which studied them objectively). Though prejudices and ethnocentrism had no place whatsoever in the ready-made interpretative scheme of the World and History, they nonetheless constructed it. Anthropology, at least in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, constructed its theories, particularly its theories of 'magic', in keeping with the dominant systems of reading and interpreting the world. This had a massive impact on its subsequent course.

In the field of anthropology, E.B. Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871) was the first to raise two fundamental questions, which still engage theoreticians of magic. The first question is whether the agents of magic and occultism (diviner, witch, magician, healer) pretend and exploit a gullible public, or whether even the practitioners do not realize that 'magic' is an *erroneous* art. The second question is why does 'magic' continue to thrive, since it does not, in reality, achieve what it promises.

The evolutionists were not, however, able to consider 'magic' (or even 'religion' or 'science') as a symbolic or ideological system, and for this reason were unable to explain it. For instance, anthropologists rarely mention the evolutionary theory of Sir James Frazer,[11] unless they are concerned with the history of anthropology, or remain fixated on old-fashioned views – for such anthropologists still exist. Mary Douglas refers ironically to a total eclipse of his star, Edmund Leach misses no chance to debunk him, yet some of Frazer's terms relating to the interpretation of magical thought are still in use even today, despite the fact that their analytical power has been drastically modified and their theoretical range thoroughly questioned. What is more interesting, however, is that Frazer's theories and paradigms are still extremely popular outside anthropological circles. I have not encountered a non-anthropological study (among them many folkloric analyses) of 'magic' which does not refer, whether directly or indirectly, to his work.

Frazer distinguished between two basic types of 'magic', which he nonetheless knew overlapped in practice: *homoeopathic magic* or *magical thought*, based on the principle of similarity or resemblance, and *sympathetic* or *contagious magic*, based on the principle of continuity or affinity or transfer. For Frazer, as for Tylor, the two types of logical interrelation (similarity and affinity-continuity) characterize thought in general, but are erroneously applied in 'magic'. As he asserted with sermonizing passion, 'magic' is not simply the precursor of 'science', but its bastard sister. In his view primitives confuse the name with the object, since they think that the name is a vital element of humans, of beings and of

objects. Thus, the magician possesses power because he knows the names: the four-letter YHWH/Adonaï, the names of the demons, of beings and things. With respect to this interpretation Tambiah observes with insight that Frazer is wrong, and the 'primitives' are right. Indeed words and things are interrelated – as has been shown by (among others) Saussure, the late structuralists, Spinoza, Wittgenstein, von Bertalanffy, and of course Foucault and Derrida. This interrelation, which is based on analogy, is called *symbolism* and we know by now from the teachings of these pioneers that analogical thinking (metaphors and metonymies) is not only arbitrary and conventional, but also rational and significant, being a bearer of significance.

Frazer's evolutionary scheme, *magic/religion/science*, is absolutely linear: 'magic' corresponds to the Stone Age, which is why Australian tribes (the aborigines, that is, Frazer's inferior or backward tribes) 'live through their Stone Age now, where all men are magicians, but there is not even one priest'. His explicit conclusion is that 'religion' replaced 'magic', and hence 'science' will fully replace 'religion'. We thus have three eras: the Era of *Magic* (the *Magical Era*) and the Era of *Religion* (the *Religious Era*); and of course the Era of *Science* (the *Scientific Era*). At any rate, this interpretative scheme is far more widely known than its maker – much like his almost proverbial, culminating view that 'magic is a pseudo-science'.

Tylor's and Frazer's evolutionary theories of 'magic' were totally opposed by Bronislaw Malinowski, the eminent theoretician of anthropological functionalism, the father of (Anglo-Saxon) ethnography, the respected pioneer of field research. Malinowski's view of 'magic' belongs to an entirely different interpretative system of social phenomena. This view is possibly the most mature expression of the theory, and the most systematic application of the method underpinning it. Malinowski (in his rather short study, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*,[12] not in his basic studies, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, *the Sexual Life of the Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, *Coral Gardens and their Magic*) proposed a clear distinction between two synchronic, intracultural, and contrary categories: *science* belongs to the realm of everyday, practical, not sacred activity, while *magic* and *religion* belong to the domain of the *sacred*, the *holy*.

The *sacred*, for Malinowski, comprises traditional acts and behaviour, which are considered sacred by the natives, and hence are carried out with respect and awe and involve prohibitions. Sacred acts are correlated to supernatural powers. The *non-sacred* is related to the arts and technical occupations (hunting, fishing, cultivation, wood-cutting etc.), which rest on careful empirical observation of the natural processes and faith in natural rhythm. Malinowski insisted especially that the fundamental issue anthropology had to address, limiting its ethnographic observation to a specific society or culture, was how certain 'symbolic' activities, such as 'ritual' or 'magic', are interdependent on other, practical or 'pragmatic' activities. He thus posed the question whether we are able to comprehend man's participation in at least two fields (or *modalities*) of reality, and

his readiness and ability to turn from one field to the other. He raised the issue, that is, of the complementarity of fields in social reality and of their parallel function. In *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (1935) he states it quite clearly:

> The interrelation between the technical objective and its magical equivalent is not only profound but also extremely essential to the native. The sequence of the technical stages, on the one hand, and of the ceremonies and incantations, on the other, run parallel. The status of a magical act is strictly determined. There are both inaugural ceremonies (such as *yowoto* and *gabu*) as well as concluding ceremonies (such as *vilamalia*).

Malinowski's view of the function of 'magic' (of *magical verbal* and *non-verbal acts*) can be summarized: 'magic' serves two functions, a psychological and a sociological one. The first is its primordial and fundamental source of inspiration. Malinowski observed that the distinction between magical and everyday speech is a native classification – at least for the Trobrianders.[13] (It is an observation which could be more generally applied: e.g. the language of technology and science, however much it may appear objective and neutral, resembles the language of persuasion, of 'rhetoric', politics, ideology, 'magic'). Malinowski considers magical language as: (a) innately sacred and distinct or special, (b) a human creation and social phenomenon, and at the same time a primeval and powerful weapon in the hands of specialists or experts, and (c) erratic and strange, that is, incomprehensible and elusive, yet acquiring significance (and therefore magical power or energy) in the specific context of the magical *performance*. The aspect of the magical *performance* which constitutes the reality of the *magical act* (which can be a ritual or oracle, a denunciation or cure, or all of these together) was also noticed by Evans-Pritchard. It gained a central place in the ritual analyses of Gregory Bateson and later of Victor Turner, Max Gluckman, Mary Douglas and others.[14]

Malinowski, however, who was the first to work in the field, pointed out the social function of the magical *performance*, that is the *execution* or *completion of the magical act or activity*. Given the dramatic and as it were representational nature of the execution of magical acts, language plays a particular role. Malinowski studied in parallel and in combination *words* and *acts, speech* and the *manipulation of objects and acts*. That is, he raised the issue of multiple media or channels of communication in this type of ritual. Tambiah writes:

> For Malinowski there are three elements or constituents in a magical performance: the (verbal) formula, the ceremony and the state of the performer [...]. In the *incantation* more particularly, he noted a tripartite structure: the base, the body and the peak, which allows the magical word or phrase to emit various forces.[15]

Malinowski used expressions such as 'verbal missile' or 'creative metaphor of speech' to denote the effectiveness of magical (or sacred) words, the significance

of which he compared to 'legal formulas'. These important observations belong to the wider approach to 'magic', which had been proposed by the theoreticians of the *Année*.

To Evans-Pritchard we owe what is possibly the most systematic, and certainly the most penetrating, anthropological *in situ* investigation of magic *in action*. From his ethnography of the Azande or Zande (*Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, 1937)[16] there arose not only a significant presentation of an indigenous case of 'magic' and 'divination', but also the native terms to describe these. The terms were reused as analytical language for the processing and interpretation of ethnographic data. These are *magic*, *witchcraft* and *sorcery*, which in their English translation – possibly beyond the original intentions of Evans-Pritchard – became key terms for subsequent anthropological approaches to 'magic'. It should be recalled that Frazer employed the morphological distinction between *homoeopathic* and *sympathetic magic*, referring to the type of rational process underlying magical thought and action. There were also, however, other typological distinctions of 'magic': *white magic//black or therapeutic magic//harmful magic*, a distinction already in use both in scientific analysis and in the spoken language, and meant to render the difference in content according to the aim of the magical action. The terms which Evans-Pritchard proposed belong to this second group: native terms (from the linguistic universe of the society under investigation). Later translated into analytical terms (from the researcher's linguistic universe), these terms are used to analyse and interpret the respective language of the natives. In this particular case, the Zande concepts which Evans-Pritchard 'translated' using English words and analytical concepts, are the following (their rendering in Greek is problematic): The concept *mangu* is rendered as a 'witchcraft substance/witchcraft', that is as a magic or hereditary magical substance which possesses the carrier without his/her seeking or knowing it; *ira mangu* is the 'witch (male/female)'. The concept *ngua* or *ngwa* is rendered as 'magic'. This denotes a technique which is supposed to achieve its goal: (a) through action, namely a magical rite and incantation; and (b) with medicines; *ira ngua* is the 'magician', the possessor, that is, and (professional or amateur) practitioner of magical art. The addition of an attributive adjective to a plain *ngua* turns it into a *gbegbere ngua* or *gbigbita ngwa*. This is rendered as 'sorcery' or 'bad magic', possibly as 'black magic' (despite the fact that Evans-Pritchard does not use the specific term at this point), as illegitimate and unlawful or even immoral magic; e.g., *kitikiti ngwa* are 'bad medicines', that is, poisons and filtres used to harm, while *ira gbigbita ngwa* is the 'sorcerer', the 'magician and witch', the 'enchanter and enchantress'. By contrast, *wene ngwa*, which is rendered as 'good magic', is benign magic, possibly socially accepted white magic. Evans-Pritchard also mentions the existence of a special guild of magicians or healers, the *abinza* or *avule*, for whom he employs the 'good old expression *witch-doctors*, since their task is to discover magicians and to fight against magic'. His insistence on carefully determining the meaning of native terms and comprehending indigenous concepts enabled Evans-Pritchard to

admit that '*except for cases where the opposite is stated*, all references to magic signify good magic'. Therefore the specific designations of *evil* and *good*, of *bad luck* and *good luck*, have a real (ideological and material) equivalent in this aristocratic society, where fate concerns men in different ways, depending on their social identity and social status.

Despite the proliferation of ethnographic analyses of 'magic', the problems raised by the subject, instead of being solved, tend also to proliferate. Anthropologists continually discover that the more cases of 'magic' they study in their attempt to typologize it, the more it eludes them (and survives clandestinely) both as a scientific subject and a social problem. The structural analyses of 'magic' that faithfully followed Evans-Pritchard's analytical model (the latter was, nonetheless, the first who avowedly sought to escape local variants of Azande magic), were replaced by dynamic analyses. New questions, more sociological and historical, were raised: e.g., is 'magic' a weapon for the weak or a means of imposing the authority of the strong? Is it a weapon for the young or elderly, for men or women? Is it a process associated with social crisis, and why, by whom and how are these junctures defined? Within the community or outside it? Is magic directed by and/or towards our 'own', by and/or towards 'aliens'?

So far anthropology (or history) has succeeded only in rare cases to study the phenomenon of 'magic' *in its entirety*: both as a system of belief and as a system of ideological, political and social practices. Usually only one of these aspects is systematically studied and, despite the outline, proposed over a century ago by M. Mauss and H. Hubert for turning the problem of 'magic' into a theory, 'magic' continues to be a cohesive and universal ideological system of reference, which, precisely because of its vagueness and opacity, is able to explain the most unpredictable, disparate and unconventional situations.

Notes

* Reprinted, with emendations, from 'The Reference Point of "Magic"', Gyrations of a Point of Reference in Anthropological Theory', in Christidis and Jordan (eds) 1997, with extensive bibliography.

1 In a series of studies Lévy-Bruhl characterizes primitive thought (*mentalité primitive*) as mystical (*mystique*), as concerns the content of its representations, and pre-logical (*prélogique*) as concerns the type of interrelations with which it 'pre-logically combines' representations, without being aware of this contradiction and impossibility. See Lévy-Bruhl 1910, i 1922, i 1936.

2 E. Durkheim (1858–1917) was the founder of modern French anthropology and sociology; he proposed, among other things, the concept of the 'collective conscience'. In his later works he analysed, e.g., religion as an expression of a profound collective sense of society's cohesion and therefore as a *social* phenomenon *par excellence*.

3 The American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn (1905–1960) studied the magic of the Navaho Indians, which he analysed with the help of theories of psychology.

4 Functionalist approaches examine social or cultural phenomena from the aspect of their *function,* or purpose. According to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955), one of the exponents of

radical functionalism, anthropological and sociological research is in essence the study of the *social group*, and especially of the extent to which it contributes to the maintenance of society's stability in general.

5 The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) may be considered the founder of the school of deconstruction. This approach chiefly aims at establishing logical or theoretical inconsistencies in anthropological and other concepts or terms.

6 For a survey of certain theories of magic and a concise evaluation of the ways in which the particular subject has been approached in the context of Greek folklore, see Psychogios 1993: 97–136.

7 See below, Ch. 24.

8 At the University of Oxford Needham was a follower of the French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss, and especially of his theory of kinship. He subsequently became a critic of Lévi-Strauss. See note 9 below.

9 Neostructuralism: Around 1970 there appeared on the British scene analyses (for instance by Leach and Needham), which often bore a (superficial) resemblance to the work of Lévi-Strauss.

10 The book comprises the Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures which Tambiah delivered in 1984 at the University of Rochester, New York. This prominent anthropologist and ethnographer of north-eastern Asia has also given us, among other things, some of the most significant analyses of magical terminology and practices. Moreover, Tambiah's exploration leads in more interesting directions: towards Freud and Weber, Wittgenstein and general epistemology.

11 Frazer 1911–1915.

12 Malinowski 1948: 17–92.

13 See also above, Ch. 21.

14 Ibid.

15 Tambiah 1990: 68–73; 1968: 175–208.

16 See also above, Ch. 17.

23

TECHNOLOGY AND MAGIC

† Alfred Gell

'Technological' capabilities are one of the distinguishing features of our species, and have been since a very early stage in evolution, if not from the very beginning. It is no longer possible to claim 'tool using' as a uniquely 'human' characteristic, because there are distinct tool-use traditions among apes, especially chimpanzees, and rather more rudimentary examples of tool use among other species as well. Human beings, however, have elaborated 'technological' means of realizing their intentions to an unprecedented degree. But what is 'technology'? And how does it articulate to the other species characteristics we possess?

The answers which have been suggested to this question have suffered from a bias arising from the misconceived notion that the obtaining of subsistence necessities from the environment is the basic problem which technology enables us to surmount. Technology is identified with 'tools' and 'tools' with artefacts, including axes and scrapers, which are presumed to have been imported in the 'food quest'. This 'food quest' has been imagined as a serious, life-or-death business, and the employment of technology as an equally 'serious' affair. *Homo technologicus* is a rational, sensible creature, not a mythopoeic or religious one, which he only becomes once he abandons the search and takes off into the realms of fantasy and empty speculation.

But this opposition between the technical and the magical is without foundation. Technology is inadequately understood if it is simply identified with tool use, and tool use is inadequately understood if it is identified with subsistence activity.

Although it may be useful for certain classification purposes – especially in prehistory – to identify 'technology' with 'tools', from any explanatory point of view technology is much more than this. At the very minimum, technology not only consists of the artefacts which are employed as tools, but also includes the sum total of the kinds of knowledge which make possible the invention, making and use of tools. But this is not all. 'Knowledge' does not exist except in a certain social context. Technology is coterminous with the various networks of social relationships which allow for the transmission of technical knowledge and provide the necessary conditions for cooperation between individuals in technical activity. But one cannot stop even at this point, because the objectives

of technical production are themselves shaped by the social context. Technology, in the widest sense, is those forms of social relationships which make it socially necessary to produce, distribute and consume goods and services using 'technical' processes.

But what does the adjective 'technical' mean? 'Technical' does not, I think, indicate an either/or distinction between production processes which do, or do not, make use of artefacts called 'tools'. There can be 'techniques' – for instance, the 'techniques of the body' listed by Mauss – which do not make use of tools that are artefacts. What distinguishes 'technique' from non-technique is a certain degree of *circuitousness* in the achievement of any given objective. It is not so much that technique has to be learned, as that technique has to be ingenious. Techniques form a bridge, sometimes only a simple one, sometimes a very complicated one, between a set of 'given' elements (the body, some raw materials, some environmental features) and a goal-state which is to be realized making use of these givens. The given elements are rearranged in an intelligent way so that their causal properties are exploited to bring about a result which is improbable in the light of this particular intervention.

Technical means are roundabout means of securing some desired result. The degree of technicality is proportional to the number and complexity of the steps which link the initial givens to the final goal which is to be achieved. Tools, as extensions of the body which have to be prepared before they can be used, are an important category of elements which 'intervene' between a goal and its realization. But no less 'technical' are those bodily skills which have to be acquired before a tool can be used to good effect. Some tools, such as a baseball bat, are exceptionally rudimentary, but require a prolonged (i.e. circuitous) learning process, in appropriate learning settings, before they can be deployed to much purpose. Highly 'technical' processes combine many elements, artefacts, skills, rules of procedure, in an elaborate sequence of purposes or subgoals, each of which must be attained in due order before the final result can be achieved. It is this elaborate structure of intervening steps, the steps which enable one to obtain result X, in order to obtain Y, in order to (finally) obtain Z, which constitute technology as a 'system'.

The pursuit of intrinsically difficult-to-obtain results by roundabout, or clever, means is the peculiar aptitude of the technological animal, *Homo sapiens*. But it is not at all true that this propensity is displayed exclusively, or even mainly, in the context of subsistence production, or that this aptitude is unconnected with the playful and imaginative side of human nature. Indeed, to state the problem in these terms is to see immediately that there can be no possible distinction, from the standpoint of 'degree of technicality', between the pursuit of material rewards through technical activity, and the equally 'technical' pursuit of a wide variety of other goals, which are not material but symbolic or expressive. From the palaeolithic period on, human technical ability has been devoted, not just to making 'tools' such as axes and harpoons, but equally to the making of flutes, beads, statues and much else besides, for diversion, adornment

and pleasure. These objects had, without any doubt, their place in a 'sequence of purposes' which went beyond the elementary delight they afforded their makers. A flute, no less than an axe, is a tool, an element in a technical sequence; but its purpose is to control and modify human psychological responses in social settings, rather than to dismember the bodies of animals.

If a flute is properly to be seen as a tool, a psychological weapon, what is the technical system of which it forms a part? At this point I would like to offer a classificatory scheme of human technological capabilities in general, which can be seen as falling under three main headings.

The *first* of these technical systems, which can be called the 'Technology of Production', comprises technology as it has been conventionally understood, i.e. roundabout ways of securing the 'stuff' we think we need: food, shelter, clothing, manufactures of all kinds. I would include here the production of signals, i.e. communication. This is relatively uncontroversial and no more need be said about it at this point.

The *second* of these technical systems I call the 'Technology of Reproduction'. This technical system is more controversial, in that under this heading I would include most of what conventional anthropology designates by the word 'kinship'.

Here we enter the domain of the *third* of our three technologies, which I will call the 'Technology of Enchantment'. Human beings entrap animals in the mesh of human purposes using an array of psychological techniques, but these are primitive by comparison with the psychological weapons which human beings use to exert control over the thoughts and actions of other human beings. The technology of enchantment is the most sophisticated that we possess.

Under this heading I place all those technical strategies, especially art, music, dances, rhetoric, gifts, etc., which human beings employ in order to secure the acquiescence of other people in their intentions or projects. These technical strategies – which are, of course, practised reciprocally – exploit innate or derived psychological biases so as to enchant the other person and cause him/her to perceive social reality in a way favourable to the social interests of the enchanter. It is widely agreed that characteristically human 'intelligence' evolved, not in response to the need to develop superior survival strategies, but in response to the complexity of human social life, which is intense, multiplex and very fateful for the individual. Superior intelligence manifests itself in the technical strategies of enchantment, upon which the mediation of social life depends. The manipulation of desire, terror, wonder, cupidity, fantasy, vanity, an inexhaustible list of human passions, offers an equally inexhaustible field for the expression of technical ingenuity.

My present purpose is not to explore the domain of the technology of enchantment, but merely to point out that it exists, and that it has to be considered, not as a separate province, i.e. 'Art' – opposed to technology – but as a technology in itself.

***

I have sketched in the scope of the idea of 'Technology'. Now I want to consider the relationship between technology – defined as the pursuit of difficult-to-obtain objectives by roundabout means – and 'magic'. Magic is, or was, clearly an aspect of each of the three technologies I have identified, i.e. the technologies of production, reproduction and psychological manipulation, or 'enchantment'. But magic is different from these technologies, each of which involves the exploitation of the causal properties of things and the psychological dispositions of people, which are numbered, of course, among their causal properties. Magic, by contrast, is 'symbolic'. Naturally, in stating this, I am conscious that there has been a prolonged debate about magic, and that not everybody agrees that magic is 'symbolic' at all, since it can be interpreted as an attempt to employ spirits or quasi-physical magical powers to intervene (causally) in nature. There is abundant native testimony to support this view, which is often the correct one to take from the standpoint of cultural interpretation, since nothing prevents people from holding at least some mistaken causal beliefs. However, from an observer's point of view, there is a distinction, in that efficacious technical strategies demonstrably exploit the causal properties of things in the sequence of purposes, whereas magic does not. The evolutionary survival value of the magical aspects of technical strategies is, therefore, a genuine problem.

I take the view that 'magic' as an adjunct to technical procedures persists because it serves 'symbolic' ends, that is to say, cognitive ones. Magical thought formalizes and codifies the structural features of technical activity, imposing on it a framework of organization which regulates each successive stage in a complex process.

If one examines a magical formula, it is often seen that a spell or a prayer does little more than identify the activity which is being engaged in and define a criterion for 'success' in it. '*Now I am planting this garden. Let it be so productive that I will not be able to harvest all of it. Amen.*' Such a spell is meaningless by itself, and it fulfils its technical role only in the context of a magical system in which each and every gardening procedure is accompanied by a similar spell, so that the whole sequence of spells constitutes a complete cognitive plan of 'gardening'.

Magic consists of a symbolic 'commentary' on technical strategies in production, reproduction and psychological manipulation. I suggest that *magic derives from play*. When children play, they provide a continuous stream of commentary on their own behaviour. This commentary frames their actions, divides it up into segments, defines momentary goals, and so on. It seems that this superimposed organizational format both guides imaginative play as it proceeds, and also provides a means of internalizing it and recalling it, as well as raw materials for subsequent exercises in innovation and recombination, using previously accumulated materials in new configurations. Not only does the basic format of children's play-commentary (*'now I am doing this, now I am doing that, and now this will happen'*...) irresistibly recall the format of spells, but the relation between reality and commentary in play and in magic-making remains essentially akin:

since the play-commentary invariably idealizes the situation, going beyond the frontiers of the merely real. When a child asserts that he is an aeroplane (with arms extended, and the appropriate sound effects and swooping movements) the commentary inserts the ideal in the real, as something which can be evoked, but not realized. But the unrealizable transformation of child into aeroplane, while never actually confused with reality, does nonetheless set the ultimate goal towards which play can be oriented, and in the light of which it is intelligible and meaningful.

The same is true of magic, which sets an ideal standard, not to be approached in reality, towards which practical technical action can nonetheless be oriented.

There is another feature which play and technology share. Technology develops through a process of innovation, usually one which involves the recombination and redeployment of a set of existing elements or procedures towards the attainment of new objectives. Play also demonstrates innovativeness – in fact, it does so continuously, whereas innovation in technology is a slower and more difficult process. Innovation in technology does not usually arise as the result of the application of systematic thought to the task of supplying some obvious technical 'need', since there is no reason for members of any societies to feel 'needs' in addition to the ones they already know how to fulfil. Technology, however, does change, and with changes in technology, new needs come into existence. The source of this mutability, and the tendency towards ever-increasing elaboration in technology, must, I think, be attributed, not to material necessity, but to the cognitive role of 'magical' ideas in providing the orienting framework within which technical activity takes place. Technical innovations occur, not as the result of attempts to supply wants, but in the course of attempts to realize technical feats heretofore considered 'magical'.

Sometimes, ethnographers record technical procedures which seem magical in themselves, even though we are assured that they are entirely practical. In the Solomon Islands, and some adjoining parts of the Pacific, there used to be employed a technique of fishing using kites. This kind of fishing was done in lagoons. The fisherman would go out in a canoe, to which was fastened a kite, fashioned like a bird, but made out of panda-nus leaves. From this kite, which hovered over the water, there descended a further string to which was attached a ball of spider's webs, which dangled just on the surface of the water. Fish in the lagoon would see the sparkling spider's web ball and mistake it for an insect. But when they bit into it the sticky spider's web would cause their jaws to adhere to one another, so that they could not let go. At this point the fisherman would reel in the whole contraption and take the fish.

This fishing technique exemplifies perfectly the concept of roundaboutness which I have emphasized already. But it also suggests very strongly the element of fantasy which brings technical ideas to fruition. Indeed, if one encountered 'kite-fishing' as a myth, rather than as a practice, it would be perfectly susceptible to Lévi-Straussian myth-analysis. There are three elements: first, the spider's

web, which comes from *dark places inside the earth* (caves); second, the kite, which is a bird *that flies in the sky*; and finally, there is the *fish that swims in the water*. These three mythemes are brought into conjunction and their contradictions are resolved in a final image, the *'fish with its jaws stuck together'* just like Asdiwal, stuck half-way up a mountain and turned to stone. One does not have to be a structuralist aficionado in order to concede that here a magical, mythopoeic, story can be realized as a 'practical' technique for catching fish.

And there are innumerable other examples which could be cited of technical strategies which, though they might or might not seem 'magical' to us, certainly do so to the practitioners. I will cite only one. In the eastern highlands of New Guinea, salt is made by burning rushes and filtering the ashes through little retorts, made of gourds. The process results in briny water, which can be evaporated to produce slabs of native salt. Technically, this procedure is rather sophisticated, since it is difficult to burn the rushes at the right temperature to produce the best ash, and difficult to concentrate the brine and evaporate it with minimum wastage. Needless to say, much magic is employed, with special formulae to cover each stage of the multi-stage process and to provide 'corrective adjustments' if the process seems to be going wrong in any way. Jadran Mimica, who provided me with these details, and whose forthcoming study of Angan salt-making is eagerly awaited as an Australian National University thesis,[1] has brilliantly analysed the indigenous conception of the salt-making process, which, in effect, recapitulates cosmogony in terms of transformations of bodily substances, approximately in the sequence:

food (wood) ⇒ faeces (ash) ⇒ urine (brine) ⇒ milk ⇒
semen (evaporated brine) ⇒ bone/shell valuables (salt)

It would take much too long to indicate, even in barest outline, the manifold connections between salt-making and the mythological context within which the Angan salt makers have developed their particular expertise, and which, without a doubt, shaped it in the course of its development. The net result is that Angan salt is 'high-tech' according to indigenous standards of evaluation, and has correspondingly high exchange value in local trade networks.

This leads me to one further observation on the relation between magic and technology. I have so far described magic as an 'ideal' technology which orients practical technology and codifies technical procedures at the cognitive-symbolic level. But what would be the characteristics of an 'ideal' technology? An 'ideal' technical procedure is one which can be practised with *zero opportunity costs*. Practical technical procedures, however efficient, always do 'cost' something, not necessarily in money terms but in terms of missed opportunities to devote time, effort and resources to alternative goals, or alternative methods of

achieving the same goal. *The defining feature of 'magic' as an ideal technology is that it is 'costless'* in terms of the kind of drudgery, hazards and investments which actual technical activity inevitably requires. Production 'by magic' is production minus the disadvantageous side-effects, such as struggle, effort, and so on.

Malinowski's *Coral Gardens and their Magic* – still the best account of any primitive technological-cum-magical system, and unlikely ever to be superseded in this respect – brings out this feature of magical thinking exceptionally well.* Trobriand gardens were, no less than Angan salt-making sites, arenas in which a magical scenario was played out, in the guise of productive activity. Yam-gardens were laid out with geometrical regularity, cleared initially of the least blade of grass, and were provided with complicated constructions described as 'magical prisms' at one corner, which attracted yam-growing power into the soil. The litanies of the garden magician, delivered at the site of the magical prisms, have been recorded in their entirety by Malinowski, with detailed exegesis. They are full of metaphorical devices of sometimes considerable obscurity, but, in effect, they consist of a prolonged series of descriptions of an ideal garden, the garden to end all gardens, in which everything occurs absolutely as it should in the best of all possible worlds. The pests which inhabit the soil will rise up, and, of their own accord, commit mass suicide in the sea. Yam roots will strike down into the soil with the swiftness of a green parrot in flight, and the foliage above will dance and weave like dolphins in the surf.

Of course, real gardens are not quite so spectacular, though the constant presence of these images of an ideal garden must be a major factor in focusing gardeners' minds on taking all practical steps to ensure that their gardens are better than they might otherwise be. However, if one considers the litanies of the garden magician a little more closely, one realizes that the garden being celebrated with so much fine language is, in effect, not a garden situated in some never-never land, but the garden which is actually present, which is mentioned and itemized in very minute, concrete, detail. For instance, each of the twenty-odd kinds of post or stick which is used to train yam creepers is listed, as are all the different cultigens, and all their different kinds of shoots and leaves, and so on. It is apparent that the real garden and its real productivity are what motivate the imaginary construction of the magical garden. It is because non-magical technology is effective, up to a point, that the idealized version of technology which is embodied in magical discourse is imaginatively compelling.

In other words, *it is technology which sustains magic, even as magic inspires fresh technical efforts*. The magical apotheosis of ideal, costless, production is to be attained technically, because magical production is only a very flattering image of the production which is actually achievable by technical means. Hence, in practice, the pursuit of technical efficiency through intelligent effort coincides with the pursuit of the ideal of 'costless' production adumbrated in magical discourse. And this observation can lead to a conclusion concerning the fate of magic in modern societies, which no longer acknowledge magic specifically, yet are dominated by technology as never before.

What has happened to magic? It has not disappeared, but has become more diverse and difficult to identify. One form it takes, as Malinowski himself suggested, is advertising. The flattering images of commodities purveyed in advertising coincide exactly with the equally flattering images with which magic invests its objects. But just as magical thinking provides the spur to technological development, so also advertising, by inserting commodities in a mythologized universe, in which all kinds of possibilities are open, provides the inspiration for the invention of new consumer items. Advertising does not only serve to entice consumers to buy particular items; in effect, it guides the whole process of design and manufacture from start to finish, since it provides the idealized image to which the finished product must conform. Besides advertising itself, there is a wide range of imagery which provides a symbolic commentary on the process and activities which are carried on in the technological domain. The imagination of technological culture gives rise to genres such as science fiction and idealized popular science, towards which practising scientists and technologists have frequently ambivalent feelings, but to which, consciously or unconsciously, they perforce succumb in the process of orienting themselves towards their social milieu and giving meaning to their activities. The propagandists, image-makers and ideologues of technological culture are its magicians, and if they do not lay claim to supernatural powers, it is only because technology itself has become so powerful that they have no need to do so. And if we no longer recognize magic explicitly, it is because technology and magic, for us, are one and the same.

Note

* Malinowski 1935.

24

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF MAGIC

Stratis Psaltou

Though magic has long been an object of enquiry among ancient philosophers, alchemists and theologians, most of their considerations belong to the history of magic rather than that of the scientific treatises which investigated it. Dominant among these treatments are the studies of Judaeo-Christian scholars, who examined the relation of magic to their respective religions, condemning it as a remnant of 'paganism' and 'heresy'. The theoretical examination of magic changed radically in the late nineteenth century thanks to the work of thinkers such as John Ferguson McLennan,[1] Herbert Spencer[2] and Andrew Lang,[3] who attempted to understand the provenance of magic and religion as a stage in man's intellectual evolution. Among the most significant contributions were those of Edward B. Tylor[4] and Sir James Frazer.[5]

Although Tylor considered magic to be 'one of the most disastrous illusions of humanity', he did not examine it as a heresy or superstition, but rather as a sort of 'pseudo-science', through which 'primitive' man sought a cause and effect relation between the act he performed and the event he wanted to realize. Frazer in his *Golden Bough* further improved upon and elaborated Tylor's views on magic, by studying its relation to religion and science, and incorporating all three in a grand evolutionary scheme. Frazer regarded magic as an early and primitive form both of religion and of science. In his view, man initially believed that he could master the forces of nature in the same way as he had mastered certain gestures (magic). His failure made him see that the world resisted his wishes, so he then endowed it with godly powers, which until then he had reserved for himself. He produced gods and began to relate to them devotionally through prayer and sacrifice (religion). When he perceived the pitfalls of his religious relationship to the world, he turned once more to the principle of causality, this time not in its magical guise but in a form which was empirically founded (science).

With respect to magic, Frazer claimed that the fundamental principle is the law of similarity (homoeopathy or sympathy): *same produces same, the influence being transmitted from the image to the object or from the part to the whole*. When you pour water you can bring forth rain, when you prick your enemy's effigy with pins it is as though you were wounding him with arrows; instead of his

effigy you can employ a part of his body (e.g. cropped hair or his nails). From this first principle Frazer deduced a second one, in order to define the nature of magic: magic ritual takes place without invoking some mythological entity (e.g., god or demon), as its effect is compulsory and automatic.

It must be said that all these thinkers, as well as their later followers and successors including R. Ranulph Marett, approached magic as an intellectual, personal affair, in much the same way, that is, as a person thinks and faces the world on their own. However, during the early twentieth century the investigation of magic brought to the fore another string of authors and scholars, broadening the debate in a decisive manner. They held that if the provenance and nature of magic were to be fundamentally understood, one needed to comprehend its social function. The work of Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, *Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie*,[6] was a landmark in this connection. The role of Henri Hubert in the writing of this book should be considered auxiliary, given that Marcel Mauss' thinking was mediated mainly through colleagues and students who were in regular or occasional contact with him, and less directly by his own speeches or writings. The views of this work influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, the most eminent anthropologists who subsequently undertook to examine the subject, e.g. Emile Durkheim,[7] Alfred Reginald Brown,[8] Bronislaw Malinowski[9] and Edward Evans-Pritchard.[10] To cite the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss: 'There are few teachings which being so esoteric had, at the same time, such a deep impact as those of Marcel Mauss.'[11] Let us consider in more detail the content of his work.

In order to proceed to a clear, full and satisfactory definition of magic, Mauss widened as much as he could the range of cases, examining not only tribal magical systems, such as those of the tribes of Australia[12] and Melanesia,[13] the Iroquois, Cherokee and Huron Indians[14] of North America, but also the magic of ancient Mexico, the forms of Indian,[15] Jewish,[16] Assyrian, Greek and Latin magic, and finally the history of medieval magic.[17] With this material before him, he considered Frazer's effort quite problematic, in as much as the latter claimed to have selected typical data, but proved to have overlooked a significant number of acts and other essentials, such as refrains or rituals in which demons intervened and which performers or onlookers characterized as magical. Mauss, moreover, argues not only that certain magical rituals are not homeopathic, but also that homeopathy is not necessarily a particular feature of magic, since homeopathic acts occur in religion as well. 'When the high priest, in the temple of Jerusalem, during the feast of Sukoth, poured water on the altar with his arms extended, it is clear that he performed a homeopathic ritual aiming to bring rain.'[18] Homeopathic rituals may be just as magical as religious ones. Furthermore, magical ritual, according to Frazer, usually acts autonomously and has a direct *mechanical* effect, in contrast with the religious ritual, which acts indirectly, through a kind of pious persuasion. However, Mauss found this distinction, too, far from adequate because religious ritual is also often coercive. The various deities in most ancient religions were thought to be incapable of

avoiding a ritual which was performed according to proper form. Moreover, it is not true that all magical rituals had a direct impact, since in magic, as well, spirits and gods are thought to exist and to act. Finally, these spirits and deities do not always faithfully obey the commands of the magician, who on many occasions is forced to entreat them.

Having detected the above weaknesses of Frazer's approach to magic, Mauss proceeds to the formulation of his own theory. He starts from the fact that magic comprises three constituents: (a) acting persons, (b) actions and (c) rules (concepts). He terms the person who performs magical acts a magician, even if he is not a professional, and calls magical concepts or rules the notions and beliefs which correspond to these acts, while the acts in relation to which he defined the remaining elements of magic, he terms magical rites. Following on these definitions, he describes each ingredient.

(A) With respect to the *magician*, Mauss ascertains that no one becomes a magician at will: specific attributes distinguish him from the common man. Some claim that the magician can be identified by certain natural characteristics: the pupil of his eye has consumed the iris, he has no shadow, or even, in the Middle Ages, his body bore the *signum Diaboli*. Mauss accepts that many phenomena of a nervous nature and intellectual gifts which we find in certain individuals have caused them to assume the role of magician; but he adds:

> let us observe that all these persons – invalids and ecstatics, neurotics and itinerants – form in essence particular categories. What gives them magical attributes is not so much their natural individual characteristics as society's attitude towards the entire species they represent.[19]

In the final analysis, what sets off some as magicians is their special place in society. Magic is thus associated with certain occupations such as those of the doctor, barber, blacksmith, shepherd, actor, or grave-digger. In the case of doctors their technique may seem apocryphal and miraculous; as for barbers, they touch bodily remains, and blacksmiths give shape to a substance associated with certain superstitions; shepherds maintain incessant contact with animals, plants and stars, and grave-diggers are in continuous contact with death. The professional life of these individuals differentiates them from other common mortals, and it is precisely this differentiation that gives them magical power. Indeed, in societies with an established priestly class, priests are often suspected of magic. At this point Mauss mentions cases where, when a religion lost ground its priests, once discredited, were thought to be magicians by the members of the new dominant faith: thus the Church of the Middle Ages considered all Jews magicians. Under the same reasoning, he added, when two cultures came into contact in the past, magic was usually attributed to the 'inferior' culture: for example, the

Dasius of India and the Lapps were accused of being magicians by the Indians and the Scandinavians respectively.

(B) The magician's acts are *rituals*. Although these rituals may often appear simplistic and trite, Mauss claims that generally they are neither simple acts nor devoid of formality. On the contrary, every magical act entails a set of prerequisites, deemed absolutely essential for the achievement of the ceremony's goal, and similar to the rules and prerequisites of religious rites.

The timing of the magical ceremony's performance is always determined with extreme care. In order to be effective, certain procedures must take place at night or at specific times of the night, at sunrise or sunset. In certain cases, the day of the performance is also significant. In ancient India, every magical ceremony was associated with a sacrifice to the new or full moon. Because the trajectory of the stars as well as the oppositions between the sun, the moon and the planets were taken into account, astrology found itself closely linked with magic from the start. The magical ceremony must take place in a specific location. Magic, just like religion, often has its own sacred places. In Christian Europe, certain magical rituals had to take place in church, and indeed on the holy altar. Magic is fond of cemeteries, crossroads, forests, swamps, the edges of fields and villages, all places, that is, believed to be inhabited by ghosts and demons. Furthermore, the substances and implements used in magic rituals are hardly incidental. Thus, for example, the Cherokee shaman[20] searched for his medicinal herbs on a specific day of the lunar month, he gathered them in a given order and he ensured that his shadow did not cover them. As for the magician and his client, they had to submit themselves to a preliminary preparation. Among other things, for example, they were often obliged to observe chastity, cleanliness and fasting. They had to wear the appropriate clothes or be naked, to paint their face or wear a mask. The sum of these rules, which governed the time, place, materials and the performers of the magic ritual, constituted an introductory ritual, similar to the preliminaries of religious ceremonies.

(C) Mauss argued that magic ceremonies were not devoid of meaning. They corresponded to conceptual representations and *laws*, which form the third element of magic. He went much further than Frazer, distinguishing these laws into two broad categories: (a) the impersonal and (b) the personified.

(a) With respect to the first, he held that the impersonal laws were decreed, explicitly or implicitly, by magic itself, or at least by alchemists and doctors. On account of the profusion of laws in this category he distinguished three sub-categories: those of *contiguity*, *sameness* and *antithesis*.

(i) The simplest notion by which we can express *contiguity* is the identification of the part with the whole. The teeth, saliva, sweat, nails, hair represent the same person, and so through them one can have

a direct impact on him, in order to either seduce or cast a spell over him.

(ii) Just as, according to the law of contiguity, the part stands for the whole, so the image stands for the object according to the law of *sameness*: a simple portrayal represents the portrayed in its entirety, *similia similibus evocantur* ('the same are recalled by the same'). This dictum is usually applied to black magic. Such a similarity may in reality be totally conventional, with the result that the mere mention of the name or its mental evocation may be sufficient for an arbitrarily chosen object to represent the victim. Furthermore, the assimilation may produce a result in a specific direction (*similia similibus curantur* (the same are cured by the same)). Mauss mentioned the myth of the cure of Iphiklos.[21] Iphiklos, seeing (in childhood) his father Phylakos brandishing the blood-spattered knife he used to castrate billy-goats, was so frightened that he became impotent and childless. When he consulted the seer Melampous, he was told to drink wine mixed with rust from the same knife for ten days, on the grounds that just as the knife was capable of causing harm to Iphiklos, so could harm again be transferred from Iphiklos to the knife.

(iii) Similarly, if like cures like, then it brings about its opposite, e.g., the castrating knife brings about fertility. For Mauss this was the third major impersonal law observable in the field of magic, the law of *antithesis*. In his view, we cannot always clearly discern all these laws in magical phenomena. Thus,

> all these abstract and impersonal portrayals of sameness, contiguity and antithesis – which sometimes were considered independent of each other – ended up being amalgamated in a natural way and became confused. They obviously constitute three aspects of the same concept.[22]

(b) The attempts to portray concretely the magical activity of the rituals and their properties resulted in the formulation of the magical law of the personified factor. From this standpoint, the notion of the demon is not opposed to the above notions, but is somehow complementary and serves to explain the interplay of these laws and properties. It replaces the notion of magical causality by the notion of a *personified cause*. In trying to present these personified magical entities, Mauss mentioned two of their great categories: the souls of the dead and the demons. In western Melanesia, for example, during every magical as well as religious ceremony, practitioners have recourse to spirits known as *tintalo*. Every dead person may become tintalo, if they prove their ability to perform a miracle or a harmful act. On the other hand,

> demons as a category of magical being must not, according to Mauss, be considered synonymous with the word *devil*, but with the terms *fairy* and *genie*. These are spirits which on the one hand slightly vary from the souls of the dead, but on the other are not thought to have reached the godly condition. In conclusion, what was significant for Mauss was that both the impersonal as well as the personified laws of magic did not seem to exist outside collective beliefs, that is, beliefs which were traditional and common to a whole group.

After completing all the above descriptions of the elements of magic, Mauss attempted to proceed to its analysis and interpretation. The world of magic resembled a world constructed in a *fourth dimension of space*. He noted that this fourth dimension was expressed accurately by various mythological notions featured in traditional societies: the *Mana* (in Melanesia), the *Orenta* (among the Iroquois of North America), the *Manitu* (among the Algonquins), the *Nagual* (in Mexico and Central America), the *Brahmans* (in India). These terms signify the same idea: the magic force, the dimension, that is, into which the magician is believed to penetrate; this dimension legitimates the performance of magical deeds and, inside it, the spirits come to life and the various demonic entities are suspended in the air.

'The magician deludes himself like the actor who forgets that he is playing a role.'[23] The magician pretends, because he is asked to pretend, because the people seek him and force him to act. He is not free, but forced to play either a traditional role or one which would satisfy the expectations of his public. Having shown that the personage of the magician is constructed by society itself, that his rituals are essentially collective actions of the community and, finally, that the laws governing his rituals are collective beliefs, Mauss concluded that the magician

> is serious because he is taken seriously, and he is taken seriously because he is needed. Consequently the belief of the magician and the public are not two different things: the first is the reflection of the second, since the magician's pretense is only possible because of the public's gullibility.[24]

His conclusion is that 'at the root of magic there are psychological situations which create illusions that are not personal, but arise from the mingling of the feelings of the individual with those of an entire society'.[25] The collective and personal consciences are continually distressed by the fear that the order of things may be overturned by drought, illness, death, astronomical phenomena, enemies, and so on. At every shock and every perception of strangeness, the personal and collective conscience grows frightened, hesitant, expectant. That is, affecting situations invariably arise, causing the personal and collective conscience to seek ways of coping in another dimension, wherein religion and magic (the magician, the magical act, the magic law) are born and develop. The

world of magic is a world constructed and inhabited 'by the successive expectations of generations, their persistent illusions, their hopes which are expressed in the form of prescriptions'.[26]

Notes

1 McLennan 1865–1876.
2 Spencer 1876–1896.
3 Lang 1901.
4 Tylor 1871.
5 Frazer 1890.
6 Paris 1904; Greek trans.: *Schediasma mias genikis theorias gia ti mageia*, trans. M. Velivathaki, ed. Th. Paradellis, Athens, 1990.
7 Durkheim (Engl. trans. 1915).
8 Brown 1922.
9 Malinowski 1925.
10 Evans-Pritchard 1933, and *idem* 1937.
11 Lévi-Strauss 1950.
12 Spencer and Gillen 1898.
13 Condrington 1890.
14 Mooney 1887.
15 Bloomfield 1896.
16 Davies 1898.
17 Hanson 1900.
18 Mauss 1902–1903; *idem* 1990: 85.
19 Mauss 1990: 95.
20 Shaman (a Siberian term): In many 'primitive' societies a man (or woman) endowed with exceptional insight who communicates with spirits in the beyond.
21 This myth is preserved in a summarizing comment on *Odyssey* 11, the *Nekuia*; the scholion can be traced back to the mythographer Pherekydes (*c.* 540 BCE). See also Apollodoros *Bibliotheca I, ix,* 12. Iphiklos was a hero from Thessaly and an Argonaut, and Melampous a diviner and doctor from Pylos, who was informed by a vulture of how to cure Iphiklos' sterility.
22 Mauss 1990: 158.
23 Ibid., pp. 189–90.
24 Ibid., pp. 190–1.
25 Ibid., p. 236.
26 Ibid., p. 249.

25

MAGIC, GENDER AND SOCIAL 'RACISM'

Constantinos Mandas

Although the phenomenon of magic has very ancient roots, historians avoided it before the early twentieth century. The causes of this aversion are reasonable: magic, as an irrational expression, discomfited historians, irrespective of their political ideology; bourgeois historians and Marxists were equally upset by what they regarded as survivals of a 'primitive', 'archaic' stage of the history of the human psyche. Only folklorists, social anthropologists and, to some extent, psychiatrists expressed an interest in this marginal but universal social phenomenon.

The reasons for the development of magic are obvious: man, being weak in the face of nature and subsequently 'anti-nature', that is, the society which he himself created, attempted to impose his strictly selfish desires upon the outside world. In some sense magic is the obverse of religion; unlike the latter, it supports the strictly personal against society and established morality.

As might be expected, magic was associated from ancient times with those members of the social body who, due to their physiology, were thought to be closer to the forces of nature. The concept of binary opposites 'man–culture', 'woman–nature', which was the foundation of ancient Greek thought, also formed the basis of the French Structuralist School.[1] Today this model is disputed: woman never was exclusively a being of nature, but was always a member of a specific cultural group, even if she occupied an inferior position. This symbolic affinity of woman with nature did not have a happy end when taken to its limits. In Euripides' tragedy *Bacchae*, the women of Thebes turn into maenads who devour deer, having left their infants in the cradle, indifferent to their supreme social mission.[2] The central concept of this seminal text, which has totally escaped the simplistic Western adherents of 'nature worship' and the 'return to nature', seems to be that our unconditional surrender to the irrational part of our soul leads to disaster. It is, however, sad to note that at the end of the twentieth century humanist studies showed a tendency towards the return to irrationality. Thus the German anthropologist Hans Peter Duerr, in his otherwise interesting book *Dream Time* (1990),[3] revived the old dichotomy of 'Man equals Civilization', 'Woman equals Nature' on the basis of anthropological material gathered from the German-speaking world, the Balkans, Africa and

Melanesia, as well as comparative material from classical antiquity. His aim was to prove that magic and everything associated with it, for instance, the werewolf, rests on solid truth. Women in particular were presented as making up the majority of magicians on account of their unbridled sexuality. It is hard to believe that certain feminists – Germaine Greer, for example – adopted in all seriousness these portentous-sounding trivialities and proposed medieval witches as models for contemporary women! Of course, Anglo-Saxon popular culture often makes such associations: in Oliver Stone's film *The Doors* (1991), Jim Morrison's mistress tells him that witches were the only free women.

In countries where academic studies are more liberal, the interrelation of classical studies with the study of the cinema produces significant results. Laura K. Gibbs-Wichrowska, in her treatise 'The Witch and the Wife' (1994), has attempted to prove that the image of the desperate and abandoned woman, who turns to magic as a last resort, is a constant in US popular culture.[4] The heroine of Adrian Lyne's anti-feminist film *Fatal Attraction* (1989) is, of course, not exactly a witch, but behaves like one and has all the appropriate characteristics: financially and socially independent, she has an unbridled sexuality, does not forgive men when they cheat on her, and resorts to irrational violence.

Not much is known about the witches of ancient Greece. Most are literary figures and usually foreign, not Greek (Medea, Circe).[5] There are nonetheless references to actual persons, such as the witch Theodoris, who was condemned to death with all her family in fourth-century BCE Athens.[6] Theodoris was a foreigner, being from Lemnos, which is hardly surprising, since marginal characters become scapegoats in all societies. Although women are more often accused of participating in magical practices, scholars of ancient magic note that in the surviving magical papyri and the inscribed *defixiones* the magicians are usually men, and most of their victims are women.[7] Winkler argues that these erotic spells, focusing as they do on the sexual gratification of the magician's male client, constitute another act of war against the female gender. His theory, though not groundless, is not wholly convincing. Other sources show women using magical erotic filtres against men: for example, on a tablet found recently in Macedonia, a woman, Phila, 'binds' the impending marriage of Thetima with Dionysophon, as well as the eventuality of marriage of this particular man with any woman, virgin or widow.[8] Although admittedly raw passion is absent from this text, it appears that Phila was interested in getting married and not in finding a lover. By contrast, Simaetha, the heroine of Theocritus' *Fifteenth Idyll*, employs disgusting substances in her magic filtres on account of her passion.

Both in antiquity and during the Middle Ages, women were often accused of poisoning others, and indeed not unjustly, since their limited muscular power made it difficult for them to apply direct force. Several examples come to mind: in myth, the murders of the king of Corinth and his daughter by Medea; in reality, the poisoning of Augustus and Claudius by their wives, Livia and Agrippina respectively (according to Tacitus and Dio Cassius).[9] Because women were involved with healing and so-called 'practical medicine', in pre-industrial socie-

ties, they were often accused of practising magic. In the turbulent Middle Ages, as well as during the Renaissance, accusations of witchcraft were an easy way of getting rid of a bothersome spouse or a bad neighbour. Individuals of political stature who were out of favour could easily be eliminated through such accusations. Thus Leonora Galigai, privy councillor to Marie de' Medici, regent of France (1610–1614), was condemned to death, having been charged with practising magic.[10] Several historians, however, argue that the witchcraft trials and the fires lit across Europe were a war against the female gender. Women's progress in the late Middle Ages, which occurred when they formed guilds of their own or joined existing ones, had to be stamped out. Women who out of necessity or by conviction lived alone or had an extra-marital sexual life became targets of witch-hunts. Older women who, due to poverty, lived alone in remote huts and practised midwifery and practical medicine, were also often accused of witchcraft.[11]

The ferocity of the witch-hunts is brilliantly depicted in the British film *Witchfinder General* (1968). In the gloomy landscape of the seventeenth-century English Civil War, a bloodthirsty lord ravages his domain looking for 'crypto-pagans'. No sooner is a woman found with her basket full of 'special' herbs than she is immediately condemned to death for being a witch. Those persecuted certainly retaliated in similar fashion, giving the impression that the entire social body was ailing. At the same time, however, the film brings out the consequences of superficial and violent Christianization in regions with a strong Celtic background, where even today neo-pagan phenomena are known.

Similar phenomena of social and sexual 'racism' also occurred in North America. Here hysteria directed against witches flourished among the stern Puritan founders of the United States. In the American Museum on the outskirts of the idyllic city of Bath in south-western England, one of the exhibits is the statue of a woman who was the first victim of Puritan intolerance on American soil: after refusing to become a Puritan, she was tortured, tried and executed by hanging. Surely this first sad episode proved that the founders of utopias do not tolerate in their midst anyone who does not accept their version of utopia. Was this woman a witch – or simply uncompromising and independent?

Notes

1 Vidal-Naquet 1982.
2 Foley 1981, esp. 142ff.
3 *Dream Time: The Boundaries between Savagery and Civilization*.
4 'The Witch and the Wife: A Comparative Study of Theocritus *Idyll 2*, *Idyll 15* and *Fatal Attraction*, in Archer et al. (eds) 252–69.
5 Kottaridou 1997: 75–82.
6 See Demosthenes, *Κατά Αριστογείτονος* 25, 79.
7 Winkler 1990: 71–101.
8 For the text of this *defixio* see Voutiras (1998).
9 On women and poison in Byzantium, see Leontaritou 1997.
10 Sofoulis 1999: 74.
11 Achterberg 1990.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* (1972–).
EKEEL	*Epetiris Kentrou Erevnis Ellinikis Laographias*.
ELA	*Epeteris Laografikou Archeiou*.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (1981–).
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (1973–4).
RE	*Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1893–).
Rev Arch	*Revue archäeologique*.
Rhein M	*Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*.

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